

Embracing Paradox and Complexities:
Agency, Resilience, and Spirituality of Korean
Women in Conflictive and Abusive Marital Relationships

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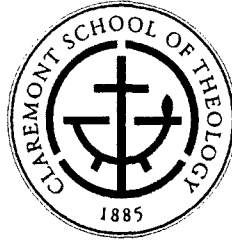
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May 2015

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation is a practical theological work that aims to convey Korean Protestant women's various and complex reasons for remaining in conflictive and abusive marital relationships. Women remaining in conflictive and abusive marital relationships have been negatively perceived as having low self-esteem or being passive and dependent. Using interdisciplinary practical theological reflection, this dissertation explores women's expressions of life agency, courage, resilience, spirituality, vocation, and hope, which have been rarely investigated or have been underestimated. While acknowledging the importance of assisting women to assess their safety and seek necessary protection, this dissertation argues that their agency, resilience, and spirituality reveal women's strength to cope with their situations and encourage embracing the complexities and multiplicity of women's lives. Therefore, the purpose of this dissertation is to increase understanding of the complexities of women's lives, roles, and decisions, including the decision to remain in conflictive and abusive marital relationships. By reflecting on their agency, resilience, and spirituality, such women can be better understood and receive better help, without being criticized and blamed for their choices to remain in conflictive and abusive marital relationships.

In Chapter 2, "Literature Review," the prevailing understandings of women who remain in marital conflicts and domestic violence situations and critics of these

understandings are discussed based on psychological perspectives, feminist and systemic approaches, and religious understandings. In addition, Korean contextual factors that affect Korean women's decisions to remain in their relationships are reviewed. In Chapter 3, "The Descriptive-Empirical Task," within the qualitative research method of phenomenology, the stories of seven Korean women are introduced, and six themes that describe their reasons for living with their situations are articulated. In Chapter 4, "The Interpretive Task," the six themes in Chapter 3 are reinterpreted and reorganized into different themes by using an interdisciplinary approach that integrates relational-cultural theory (RCT), feminist and womanist practical/pastoral theology, Korean feminist perspectives, and systemic/contextual theory in a holistic perspective. This approach facilitates reflection not only on women's decision-making processes in their own contexts, family, society, and culture, but also aids exploration of their strengths, agency, coping strategies, resilience, courage, growth, vocations, and hope. In Chapter 5, "The Normative Task," research participants' feelings for their husbands are described, and the compassionate spirituality found in research participants' lives is interpreted based on the concept of *jeong* in the Korean context. This chapter argues that research participants' radical agency for transformative possibilities is grounded in their compassionate spirituality. In Chapter 6, "The Pragmatic Task," an argument is presented that the implicit reality of the Korean context needs to be unpacked and marital conflicts normalized so that women can be freer to share their struggles and seek help without fear of being criticized. This chapter provides suggestions for practical/pastoral practices to not only care for women in conflictive and abusive marital relationships, but also to advocate for public discourse, new actions, ethics, and policies. In Chapter 7,

“Conclusion and Contribution,” a final reflection along with suggestions for future research is presented.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Discussion of the Problem

Many individuals and couples enter into marriage without sufficient awareness of the various aspects of marriage and often think that their marriages will complete their love and their honeymoon period will continue forever. However, in their marriages, couples experience various conflicts attributable not only to different personalities, lifestyles, and beliefs, but also to issues related to finances, childrearing, and family of origin. Nevertheless, couples, and even mental health professionals, often ignore or suppress the fact that “nearly all marriages are disturbed” at some level or another.¹

Not only are marital couples more likely to consider their conflicts as threats or crises rather than as normal and as opportunities for growth, but marital conflicts are also often thought to be different from domestic violence in that domestic violence is perceived as happening only to severely “sick people” or “those who are not really mature.”² Except for brutal ongoing violence, it is sometimes hard for individuals and couples to make a clear distinction as to whether they are simply experiencing marital conflicts or whether it is domestic violence. For individuals, understandings of violence can vary based on their different understandings of violence’s visibility, intensity, and frequency; as an example, for some, “slaps, pushes, shoves, and spankings” might be considered “normal or acceptable” violence rather than “abusive violence,” and for others, intimidation and verbal/emotional abuse is not considered serious.³ It is also easy

¹ Israel W. Charny, “Marital Love and Hate,” *Family Process* 8 (1969): 1.

² DeLoss D. Friesen and Ruby M. Friesen, *Counseling and Marriage* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1989), 85; Charny, 1.

³ Richard J. Gelles, *Intimate Violence in Families* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1997), 15.

to overlook that studies on domestic violence have been developed based on work on “a variety of family conflict issues,” whether these conflicts were extreme cases or not, and that domestic violence can exist in various forms; verbal, emotional, physical, instrumental, sexual, and/or financial.⁴ According to Harway and Hansen, domestic violence rarely begins “in the most severe forms;” rather, it often begins with emotional and verbal abuse and can graduate to the use of objects to threaten, such as throwing or breaking of objects (instrumental form), and physical violence, even though it does not necessarily follow this pattern.⁵

In dealing with marital conflicts and domestic violence, some couples try to work on their individual or relational issues and problems, while some become estranged from the relationship or think of getting divorced. Even though for some people divorce is easily regarded as one of their options in dealing with their marital conflicts, including domestic violence, divorce is often considered “a last resort.”⁶ As a person who grew up in a family that has ongoing conflicts between a Confucian patriarchal father and an evangelical Christian mother, I sometimes questioned why my mother has continued to live with my father despite her suffering from the relationship with my father who was seen as oppressive. In my journey to become a pastoral counselor, I have also met Korean women who have struggled and suffered in their marital relationships, but did not want to be divorced. Based on these experiences, I continue to wonder about women’s reasons

⁴ Michael P. Johnson, “Patriarchal Terrorism and Common Couple Violence: Two Forms of Violence against Women,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 57 (1995): 283; Michele Harway and Marsali Hansen, *Spouse Abuse: Assessing and Treating Battered Women, Batterers, and Their Children* (Sarasota, FL: Professional Resource Press, 1994), 41, 69. The forms of domestic violence will be discussed in Chapter 3 with Figure 5 while discussing the experiences of research participants in conflictive and abusive marital relationships.

⁵ Harway and Hansen, 41.

⁶ Friesen and Friesen, 82.

for remaining in relationships despite their marital afflictions.

In the literature discussing women who remain in marital conflicts and even domestic violence situations, I have noticed that women have often been criticized as having low self-esteem or being passive and dependent, based on psychological studies that focus on their typical feelings, behaviors, and personality types. Feminist and systemic perspectives have drawn attention to various systems that have affected women, their roles, and their decision-making processes; however, such understandings of women are more likely to reflect negatively on women in conflictive and abusive relationships because they suggest that women have been socialized into gender-biased roles and have acquiesced to the status quo imposed by multiple layers of systems surrounding them. In addition, some religions, religious beliefs, and religious communities with patriarchal systems and gender-biased teachings have been criticized as systems that have negatively affected women's lives in dealing with marital conflicts and domestic violence.

While women in conflictive and abusive relationships have been negatively perceived in several ways, in thinking back on the Korean women I have met, I understand their reasons for remaining in difficult relationships as revealing the complexities of their lives and decisions; these reasons could be considered paradoxical, incomprehensible, and even mysterious rather than simply worthy of criticism. The reasons involve various and complex aspects of the women's lives, including psychological, socio-economic, socio-cultural, and religious/spiritual aspects, and the interplay of those aspects. Furthermore, I have been impressed by Korean women's expressions of life agency, courage, resiliency, spirituality, vocation, and hope in coping with their marital afflictions. However, the prevailing understandings, which reflect

negatively on women in conflictive and abusive relationships, have rarely discussed or have underestimated women's efforts and strength in their marital lives, which I have heard and witnessed. These understandings have contributed to the development of misconceptions regarding women and have also been used inappropriately in trying to help women by blaming them for not having self-esteem, seeking help, or leaving the relationships. As a result, women experiencing marital conflicts and abusive relationships often hesitate to reach out for help for fear of being criticized or not receiving proper assistance, whether from their families, their churches, or Korean society overall.

Discussion of the Thesis

This dissertation is a practical theological work that aims to convey the voices and experiences of Korean Protestant women who have chosen to maintain conflictive and abusive marital relationships within which they have struggled and suffered. In this dissertation, I examine Korean Protestant women's various and complex reasons for remaining in situations of marital conflict and domestic violence, which include psychological, socio-economic, socio-cultural, and religious/spiritual aspects. In exploring various reasons for women remaining, I will focus my attention on Korean women's expressions of life agency, courage, resiliency, spirituality, vocation, and hope, which have been rarely presented or have been underestimated in the discussion of women who remain in conflictive and abusive marital relationships. It is my hypothesis that study of the complexities of women's lives—especially, their roles, decision-making, agency, courage, resilience, religion/spirituality, vocation, and hope—will reveal that women who remain in conflictive and abusive marital relationships can be doing so from a position of strength and will most benefit from care that is non-pathologizing. The

purpose of this dissertation is not to find a more valuable understanding, nor to encourage Korean women to stay in the midst of suffering. Rather, it is to understand the complexities of women's lives, roles, and decisions by reflecting on their agency, courage, resiliency, religion/spirituality, vocation, and hope, so that they can be better understood and receive better help without being criticized and blamed for their ways of living. In other words, this practical theological work will take a both/and position, instead of an either/or position, in order not to exclude any expressions of women's reasons for staying in that women's reason for staying are both worthy of respect and support and also costly to them.⁷

Scholarly literature in several academic fields helps to develop the basis of this dissertation. The critics of individual psychology and individualism help me reflect on the tendency to criticize women as passive and as having low self-esteem and have raised questions about what it means for women to have self-esteem and be self-actualized, which have been considered to be the goals for women experiencing marital conflicts and domestic violence, as I will show in the literature review in Chapter Two. Relational feminism, relational-cultural theory (RCT), and Korean feminists' perspectives have drawn attention to women's sense of self in relationships and their sense of having "substance," "strong opinions," and "personal power" rather than being reductionistically characterized as mere victims in abusive relationships.⁸ In addition, recent studies about coping strategies and resilience have paid attention to religion and religious practices as well as spirituality in the discussion of human coping strategies and resilience. These

⁷ Virginia Goldner et al., "Love and Violence: Gender Paradoxes in Volatile Attachments," *Family Process* 29 (1990): 1.

⁸ Goldner et al., 9.

arguments have inspired “a positive re-description of the meaning of staying” for women in conflictive and abusive marital relationships by conveying the complexities of women and their lives.⁹

In order to care for people’s souls, it is necessary for people, especially helping professionals, to appreciate “human complexities”¹⁰ and the “paradoxical mysteries”¹¹ of human life. Embracing complexities means acknowledging the interplay of various dimensions, including psychological, systemic, and religious dimensions, that have affected women’s lives and their decision-making processes, rather than pointing to single elements in discussing women’s experiences. As argued by Herbert Anderson, the goal of care needs to be “empowering people to embrace paradox, seek justice, acknowledge finitude, and practice hospitality in the face of fear and contingency.”¹² Once the safety of women in marital conflict and domestic violence situations is assessed and protected, it is important to provide a safe environment for women to express and explore, not only their concerns, feelings, and thoughts, but also their reasons for staying, acknowledging human complexities and the paradoxical mysteries of married life so that their lives and decisions can be respected, whether to leave or stay, and they can have opportunities to contemplate the various possible resources.

Methodology and Methods

This dissertation is a practical/pastoral theological work. It emphasizes both human experiences and human situations as the starting points of its study and goes back

⁹ Goldner et al., 9.

¹⁰ Herbert Anderson, “A Spirituality for Family Living,” in *Spiritual Resources in Family Therapy*, ed. Froma Walsh (New York: The Guilford Press, 2009), 196.

¹¹ Thomas Moore, *Care of the Soul: A Guide for Cultivating Depth and Sacredness in Everyday Life* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1992), xix.

¹² Herbert Anderson, 196.

to humans' experiences/situations through practices and actions after reflecting on them using interdisciplinary approaches, as theological reflections.¹³ In other words, a practical/pastoral theological work uses the practice/praxis-theory-practice/praxis approach, a sequential, circular model. In particular, Richard Osmer's formulation of practical theology, which is used in this dissertation, helps to understand practical theology in terms of its departure points and procedures. Osmer identifies four "core tasks" of practical theological interpretation based on four questions: (1) the descriptive-empirical task: what is going on?; (2) the interpretive task: why is this going on?; (3) the normative task: what ought to be going on?; and (4) the pragmatic task: how might we respond?¹⁴ Seeking answers to these questions means addressing these four core tasks of practical theology. Therefore, this practical theological work starts from human experiences and situations by asking, "What is going on?" and eventually returns to the people's situations with answers to the question, "What ought to be going on?"

In order to hear the voices of Korean women in conflictive and abusive marital relationships for the descriptive-empirical task, I will use the qualitative research method of phenomenology. A phenomenological research approach will be used to provide "thick descriptions" of Korean women's lived experiences by listening to their stories and reasons for staying in their marriages and enduring their marital struggles. In this portion of the research, my emphasis will be on description and comprehension; generating knowledge and theory will be emphasized in later parts of the research.¹⁵ This method

¹³ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 5-7; Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), 8-9.

¹⁴ Osmer, 4

¹⁵ Swinton and Mowat, 30, 46, 106.

provides “a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of [women’s] everyday experiences.”¹⁶ In particular, I will use a hermeneutic, interpretive phenomenology approach rather than empirical, transcendental, descriptive phenomenology approach. Hermeneutic phenomenology rejects “the possibility of... objectivity or neutrality” and emphasizes the researchers’ awareness of their own pre-understandings or prejudice.¹⁷ Within a hermeneutic, interpretive phenomenology approach, I will not pretend to have objectivity or neutrality, but rather strive to be aware of my own pre-understandings or prejudices and “historical situatedness,” which is necessary for describing and interpreting a phenomenon, along with continuous reflection.¹⁸

The guidelines I have used for data collection and data analysis for a hermeneutic, interpretive phenomenology approach are mainly based on *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, by John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, and the online resource, “Analyzing Qualitative Data,” by Ellen Taylor-Powell and Marcus Renner. In particular, data analysis will be done in five steps, though the process will be, as Taylor-Powell and Renner describe, “fluid, so moving back and forth between steps is likely.” They name the steps as follows: (1) “get to know your data”; (2) “focus the analysis”; (3) “categorize information”; (4) “identify patterns and connections within and between categories”; (5) “interpretation-bringing it all together.”¹⁹ These steps will be explained in Chapter 3. This

¹⁶ Swinton and Mowat, 106.

¹⁷ Swinton and Mowat, 109-14; Carla Willig, *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology: Adventures in Theory and Method*, 2nd ed. (Maidenhead, England: Open University Press, 2008), 55-56; Norm Friesen, Carina Henriksson, and Tone Sævi, eds., *Hermeneutic Phenomenology in Education: Method and Practice* (Rotterdam: SensePublishers, 2012), 2, 21-23.

¹⁸ Swinton and Mowat, 111, 113.

¹⁹ Ellen Taylor-Powell and Marcus Renner, “Analyzing Qualitative Data,” <http://learningstore.uwex.edu/assets/pdfs/g3658-12.pdf>, 2-5 (accessed May 25, 2014).

analysis process was done “by hand” and also by using NVivo 10.²⁰ Throughout the process, memoing and journaling were used to reflect on what was said and seen.

For practical theological reflection’s interpretive and normative tasks, I use an interdisciplinary approach by integrating relational-cultural theory (RCT), feminist and womanist practical/pastoral theology, Korean feminist perspectives, and systemic/contextual theory. Various elements presented in RCT, systemic/contextual approaches, feminist practical/pastoral theology, and Korean feminist perspectives will be explored in a holistic perspective that integrates various aspects. This holistic perspective can be partially explained by the “model of Spirit-centered wholeness” introduced by Howard Clinebell and can be deepened by the “multidimensional model for spiritual assessment” by George Fitchett.²¹ Fitchett’s 7x7 model includes two major subdivisions, holistic dimensions and spiritual dimensions.²² The holistic dimensions help to reflect not only medical, psychological, family system, and social-cultural dimensions that are similar to the dimensions of Clinebell’s model.²³ The spiritual dimensions, as “the dimension of life that reflects the need to find meaning in existence and in which we respond to the sacred,” help to reflect on individuals’ beliefs, life agency, courage, coping strategies, resilience, vocation, hope, and spirituality. These dimensions, which have been neglected and underestimated in research on domestic violence, will be discussed in

²⁰ For an explanation of NVivo 10, see the website http://www.qsrinternational.com/products_nvivo.aspx.

²¹ Howard Clinebell, “The Six Dimensions of Wholeness Centered in Spirit,” in *Spirit Centered Wholeness: Beyond the Psychology of Self*, ed. H. Newton Malony, Michele Papen-Daniels, and Howard Clinebell, 9-36 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), 9; George Fitchett, *Assessing Spiritual Needs: A Guide for Caregivers*, 2nd ed. (Lima, OH: First Academic Renewal Press, 2002), 16.

²² Fitchett, 42.

²³ Fitchett, 42.

Chapter Two.²⁴ Pamela Cooper-White, in her article, “Complicated Woman,” argues that women and women’s lives are complicated, not only because of their multiple roles and relationships as daughters, mothers, wives, employees, and so on, but also because of their “multiple internal states of emotion and identity.”²⁵ Therefore, by using the holistic perspective, the practical theological reflection in the interpretive task and the normative task aims to understand the complexities, multiplicities, and “paradoxical mysteries” of Korean women’s lives and their decisions in the context of their own situations by listening to their stories and respecting their life decisions.²⁶

For discerning implications and applications as the pragmatic task, I also use an interdisciplinary approach by integrating relational-cultural theory (RCT), feminist and womanist practical/pastoral theology, Korean feminist perspectives, and systemic/contextual theory, and this approach will be discussed in Chapter 4. This task is aimed at describing the implications of the study’s findings and also “strategies and actions that [may be] undertaken to shape events toward desired goals.”²⁷ In particular, suggestions for practical/pastoral practices will be presented first for women’s individual care. This individual care could mean not only caring for Korean women who have coped with their marital issues, but also caring for and facilitating the contribution of their

²⁴ Fitchett, 16. According to George Fitchett, pastoral counselors have a tendency to not use the word *diagnosis*, since it has a medical connotation; rather, based on the influence of Paul Pruyser and Don Browning, pastoral counselors have felt it necessary to use the term, *spiritual assessment*. In using *spiritual assessment*, Fitchett does not differentiate the term *spiritual* from “spirituality, religion, religiosity, pastoral, faith, or belief,” because “the distinctions are not important” for him, and I agree. In addition, Fitchett does not differentiate *assessment* from *diagnosis* because these terms are “both a statement of a perception and a process of information gathering and interpretation.” Fitchett, 15-17.

²⁵ Pamela Cooper-White, “Complicated Woman: Multiplicity and Relationality across Gender and Culture,” in *Women Out of Order: Risking Change and Creating Care in a Multicultural World*, ed. Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner and Teresa Snorton (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 9.

²⁶ Herbert Anderson, 196; Thomas Moore, xix.

²⁷ Osmer, 10.

wisdom to their communities. In other words, these women are considered as persons, agents, or experts who can give care just as much as they need to receive care. Second, suggestions for practical/pastoral practices will be presented for families, institutions, and/or the society, because individual issues cannot be separated from public issues.²⁸ As indicated in the RCT approach, people, relationships, and theories are “embedded in” their context, and “the personal is political, the political is personal, and the rewriting of a psychological paradigm becomes an act of social justice.”²⁹ Therefore, for the implications and applications, I suggest not only care for Korean women and men in conflictive and abusive marital relationships, but also advocate public discourse, changed action, ethics, policies, and even transformation of the Korean family, society, and culture. Therefore, this dissertation is intended to apply an integrative approach combining empirical-analytical, hermeneutical, and critical-political approaches.³⁰

Definitions

Conflictive and Abusive Marital Relationships

In this dissertation, the phrase conflictive and abusive marital relationships refers to various terminology and marital dynamics, including marital conflicts, domestic violence, domestic abuse, wife-assault, wife-abuse, and wife-battering.³¹ Domestic violence exists in various forms, including verbal, emotional, physical, instrumental,

²⁸ Don Browning, Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, Pamela D. Couture, K. Brynolf Lyon, and Robert M. Franklin, *From Culture Wars to Common Ground*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 2.

²⁹ Judith V Jordan, *Relational-Cultural Therapy* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2010), 6, 26.

³⁰ Gijsbert D. J. Dingemans, “Practical Theology in the Academy: A Contemporary Overview.” *Journal of Religion* 76 (1996): 87, 91.

³¹ Da Young Song, Mi Jung Kim, and Hee Kyu Choi, *새로쓰는 여성복지론* [Feminist social welfare for women] (Seoul: YangSeoWon, 2011), 308.

sexual, and financial.³² Even though domestic violence is thought to be about brutal physical violence and life threatening situations, domestic violence can happen in the midst of marital conflicts, and people have different understandings of domestic violence as described in the introduction. Therefore, I use the terms “marital conflicts” and “domestic violence” at the same time or use the phrase “conflictive and abusive marital relationships” rather than using “domestic violence” by itself in referring to women who experience some types of violence, whether emotional, verbal, or physical. In other words, I take into consideration a variety of types and intensities and frequencies of marital conflicts, including various forms of domestic violence, even if the women I interviewed consider their experiences as marital conflict rather than domestic violence. In addition, I use this term in order to avoid individuals’ or couples’ hesitation, hostility, or preoccupation in referring to their experiences of marital conflicts as domestic violence.

Religion, Spirit, and Spirituality

Depending on individuals and scholars, the terms religion, spirit, Spirit, and spirituality have been used differently or interchangeably.³³ Fitchett does not distinguish the term *spiritual* from similar terms, such as “spirituality, religion, religiosity, pastoral, faith or belief” in describing his spiritual assessment model.³⁴ Froma Walsh defines religion as “an organized, institutionalized belief system, set of practices, and faith community” and spirituality as “a dimension of human experience involving personal

³² Harway and Hansen, 69.

³³ Froma Walsh, “Religion, Spirituality, and Family,” in *Spiritual Resources in Family Therapy*, ed. Froma Walsh (New York: Guilford Press, 2009), 5; Dawnovise N. Fowler and Michele A. Rountree, “Exploring the Meaning and Role of Spirituality for Women Survivors of Intimate Partner Abuse,” *The Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* 63, nos. 3-4 (2009): 1.

³⁴ Fitchett, 16.

transcendent beliefs and practices, within or outside formal religion, through family and cultural heritage, and in connection with nature and humanity.”³⁵

Swinton differentiates spirit from spirituality by defining the human spirit as “the essential life-force that undergirds, motivates, and vitalizes human existence” and spirituality as “the specific way in which individuals and communities respond to the experience of the spirit.”³⁶

Due to various criticisms of institutionalized forms of religion, some scholars prefer to use “spirituality” as opposed to “religion” in their discussions. However, religion and spirituality are not mutually exclusive in that they are both associated “with internal processes and traits, as well as outward manifestations of those inner qualities.”³⁷ In addition, due to different understandings and definitions of the terms depending on individuals, it is sometimes hard to differentiate one from the other and understand them separately. Therefore, in applying Swinton’s argument, it is important to be mindful of “uncertainty and mystery” in discussion of religion, spirit, and spirituality.³⁸ For this reason, I pay attention to the roles and influences of religion, spirituality, and religious/spiritual beliefs and practices for Korean women who are considered to be “theological agent[s]” to articulate their own theological beliefs, rather than spending time to define various terms.³⁹ More discussion on the issues related to these terms will be found in Chapter 5.

³⁵ Froma Walsh, “Family Resilience: A Framework of Clinical Practice,” *Family Process* 42, no. 1 (2003): 5.

³⁶ Swinton, 14.

³⁷ Fowler and Rountree, 2.

³⁸ Swinton, 13.

³⁹ Riet Bons-Storm, “Putting the Little Ones into the Dialogues: A Feminist Practical Theology,” in *Liberating Faith Practices: Feminist Practical Theologies in Context*, ed. Denis M. Ackermann and Riet Bons-Storm (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 14.

Coping Strategies and Resilience

Coping strategies are defined as “a complex set of processes that may moderate influences of stressful life events,” and they are developed when dealing with or in response to adversity and stress.⁴⁰ Coping strategies, as “inner and external resources,” include the abilities to problem solve and use social and communal support systems.⁴¹ Resilience can be defined as “the ability to respond or perform positively in the face of adversity, to achieve despite the presence of disadvantages, or to significantly exceed expectations under given negative circumstances.”⁴² In RCT, relational resilience is “the ability to connect, reconnect, and/or resist disconnection,” and developing relational resilience means not only “the capacity to move back into connection” after experiencing disconnection, but also “the capacity to reach out for help.”⁴³ Resilience and relational resilience can be discussed on individual, familial, and communal levels.⁴⁴

Audience

The primary audience for my dissertation is women who have struggled in their conflictive and abusive marital relationships, including the Korean Protestant women I interviewed. Whenever I share my interest and desire to work on this issue, it creates solidarity and companionship between me and others, whether they are Korean women,

⁴⁰ Luo Lu and Chiou Shiang Chen, “Correlates of Coping Behaviors: Internal and External Resources,” *Counseling Psychology Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (1996): 297-308. Cited in Ruth Davis, “The Strongest Women: Exploration of the Inner Resources of Abused Women,” *Qualitative Health Research* 2, no. 9 (2002): 1249.

⁴¹ Davis, 1249.

⁴² Mark A. Brennan, “Conceptualizing Resiliency: An Interactional Perspective for Community and Youth Development,” *Child Care in Practice* 14, no. 1 (2008): 55-64; Robbie Gilligan, “Adversity, Resilience, and the Educational Progress of Young People in Public Care,” *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties* 12, no. 2 (2007): 125-45.

⁴³ Jordan, 31.

⁴⁴ Froma Walsh, “Family Resilience,” 1-2; Karen Benzies and Richelle Mychasiuk, “Fostering Family Resiliency: A Review of the Key Protective Factors,” *Child and Family Social Work* 14 (2009): 105.

Korean American women, European American men or women, African or African American men or women, or some other ethnicity, and they share about women who have struggled with and continued to work on their marital relationships. I hope that this work can convey women's experiences and efforts in holding on their families and relationships and offer "radical respect and a deep appreciation" for them so that they can experience being heard and felt and also empowered through being heard and felt.⁴⁵

This dissertation is also intended to encourage families, church members, clergy, professors, theologians, social workers and other helping professionals, and policy-makers to reflect on their misunderstandings and preconceptions and to advocate for holistic and systemic views in understanding women in conflictive and abusive marital relationships. I hope that this work can present women's various and complex reasons for remaining in marital conflicts and domestic violence situations, which include psychological, socio-economic, socio-cultural, and religious/spiritual aspects. In presenting various and complex reasons for women remaining, I want these audiences to pay more attention to women's efforts and strengths, such as their life agency, courage, resilience, spirituality, vocation, and hope, which have been neglected or underestimated, so they can understand the complexities of women's lives, roles, and decisions and provide better help for women without criticizing and condemning their ways of living.

Scope and Limitations

It was my intention to limit my empirical research to Korean Protestant Christian women who have been in Korean male-female marital relationships for more than five years, have been a Christian more than five years, and have experienced conflictive and

⁴⁵ Jordan, 35.

abusive marital relationships, because my research interest was to have in-depth interviews with Korean Christian women who to some degree have settled into their marriage and religious community. I expected these female volunteers would include: those who did not seek counseling in spite of their marital struggles; those who experienced some type of counseling due to their marital struggles; and those who utilized a domestic violence shelter program. However, I met eight women, and two of them did not qualify for my research. One woman was considered as not being in an abusive relationship, since she denied any experiences of abuse or violence in spite of her recent marital conflicts and struggles. Another woman was not a Christian and has been separated from her husband for about a year due to continuous conflicts related to her husband's infidelity and irresponsibility. I decided to exclude the first woman and include the second woman in my research; more explanation of these decisions will be found in Chapter 3. In terms of conflictive and abusive marital relationships, I focus on the women with the abusive husbands, rather than on the violent husbands or the children who experience their parents' marital conflicts. I also did not include men whose wives are abusive to them, even though I was asked to have an interview with men while recruiting volunteers. The reasons for not including these people are (1) women with abusive husbands are often in a victimized position in the patriarchal Korean context; (2) women are often criticized whether they decide to remain in the marriage or get divorce as a result of marital conflicts and domestic violence; and (3) including additional groups in this dissertation would lead to having too much data. For these reasons, I do not address husbands with abusive wives, understanding and helping abusive husbands, or the child

abuse issues related to marital conflicts and domestic violence, including the influences of marital conflicts on children.

In addition, I have my own limitations in interviewing, analyzing, and presenting experiences of Korean women in conflictive and abusive marital relationships within my gender, social location, experiences, education, clinical training, and theology. At the time of the interviews, I was a 40 year-old Korean female, Ph.D. student, the wife of a Korean ordained pastor in a Pentecostal denomination in Korea, and a mother of two sons, ages ten and eight. As indicated earlier, I grew up in a family that has ongoing conflicts between a Confucian patriarchal father and an evangelical Christian mother. I have also continued to meet other women who have struggled and suffered in their marital relationships in various settings, such as neighbors, churches, and counseling settings. These experiences have motivated me to develop this dissertation, as has my education, training, and other experiences. My experiences as a girl in my patriarchal family and as a woman in a Korean society, in addition to my experiences as a citizen of Gwangju, my hometown, especially experiences related to the Gwangju Democratization Movement in 1980, led me to think about human suffering, discrimination, and oppression in Korean society. In addition, my experiences as an Asian female international student in Atlanta and Claremont led me to continuously reflect on human conflicts, suffering, and discrimination in relation to social injustice and oppression. Exposure to diverse churches, such as Presbyterian, Methodist, Pentecostal, Episcopal, and non-denominational churches, education in seminaries, Yonsei University, Candler School of Theology, and Claremont School of Theology, and clinical training and experience in Ewha Women's University, MokDong Hospital, Yonsei University Center

for Counseling and Coaching Services, The Clinebell Institute for Pastoral Counseling and Psychotherapy, and National Youth Healing Center have affected the development of my identity, perspectives, and theology. (I specifically discuss such experiences and perspectives in Chapter 4). Therefore, I am aware of my pre-understandings and prejudices and “historical situatedness,” which are limitations, but are also necessary for developing this dissertation, along with continuous reflection.⁴⁶

Originality and Contributions

This is a practical/pastoral theological work that is intended to present Korean Protestant women’s various and complex reasons for staying in conflictive and abusive marital relationships through reflecting on psychological, socio-economic, socio-cultural, and religious/spiritual aspects and their interplay. In particular, this study pays attention to aspects that have been neglected and underestimated in helping women struggling with their marital lives: women’s life agency, resiliency, spirituality, hope, and other expressions, which could be named as their strength to cope with their situations. This attention will provide opportunities for families, church members, clergy, professors, theologians, social workers and helping professionals, and policy-makers to reflect on their perspectives and biases embedded in their thoughts, studies, research, helping structures, and policies, not only in the Korean context, but also in any contexts where work is done with women in conflictive and abusive marital relationships. This study is also intended to contribute to developing helping programs, structures, and policies that are mindful of the complexities of women’s lives and decisions that might be considered paradoxical, incomprehensible, and even mysterious, so that women do not hesitate to

⁴⁶ Swinton and Mowat, 111, 113.

reach out for help or fail to get proper help that does not blame and criticize them.

Outline of the Chapters

In Chapter 2, “Literature Review,” the prevailing understandings of women who remain in marital conflicts and domestic violence situations are explained based on psychological perspectives, feminist and systemic approaches, and religious understandings. In contrast to the prevailing understandings, different perspectives for looking at women and women’s decision-making processes are also discussed by drawing on critiques of psychology and individualism, relational feminist and relational-cultural theory (RCT), and arguments regarding religion and spirituality as coping strategies and sources of resiliency. In addition, Korean women’s reasons for remaining in conflictive and abusive marital relationships as noted in the literature are presented.

In Chapter 3, “The Descriptive-Empirical Task,” the qualitative research method of phenomenology is explained and used to provide “thick descriptions” of research participants’ lived experiences. The stories of six Korean Protestant women and one non-Christian Korean woman are shared through the use of pseudonyms, and their reasons for living with their situations are articulated by categorizing their responses into six themes: (1) Marriage and Divorce in Korean Society: Advice, Values, and Reputations; (2) Changes in Themselves and Their Husbands; (3) Compassion for Husbands (*ansreoum* and *bulsangham*); (4) Responsibility and Duty; (5) Economics of Divorce and Concerns for Children; and (6) Religion, Beliefs, and Rituals.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Korean terms introduced in this dissertation were transliterated based on a formal Korean Romanization scheme. “Revised Romanization of Korean,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revised_Romanization_of_Korean (accessed in Nov. 20, 2014).

In Chapter 4, “The Interpretive Task: Interdisciplinary Practical Theological Reflection,” my standpoint as a practical/pastoral theologian is described to present my theoretical and theological perspectives. Next, the interdisciplinary approach used for the interpretive task of practical theological reflection and the normative task is explained. In sum, the interdisciplinary approach integrates relational-cultural theory (RCT), feminist and womanist practical/pastoral theology, Korean feminist perspectives, and systemic/contextual theory. Various elements presented in these approaches are explored in a holistic perspective, mainly based on the “model of Spirit-centered wholeness” by Howard Clinebell and the “multidimensional model for spiritual assessment” by George Fitchett.⁴⁸ Finally, the six themes indicated as research participants’ reasons for living in their situations in Chapter 2 are reinterpreted and reorganized into different themes by using the interdisciplinary approach. This approach facilitates reflection not only on the interactions between the women’s bodies, emotions, thoughts, and contexts, such as family, society, and culture, but also aids exploration of their strengths, agency, coping strategies, resilience, courage, growth, vocations, and hope that have been neglected and underestimated.

In Chapter 5, “The Normative Task: The Paradoxical and Mysterious Presence of Compassionate Spirituality,” research participants’ feelings for their husband, such as *ansreoum* (안쓰러움), *bulsangham* (불쌍함), *jeong* (정, 精), *yeonmin* (연민, 憐愍 or 憐憫), and *cheukeunjisim* (측은지심, 惻隱之心), are described. The meanings and roles of these feelings are explored, and the compassionate spirituality found in research participants’ lives is interpreted based on the concept of *jeong* in the Korean context. This chapter

⁴⁸ Clinebell, 9; Fitchett, 16.

aims to argue that research participants' radical agency for transformative possibilities is grounded in their compassionate spirituality.

In Chapter 6, "The Pragmatic Task: Implications and Suggestions for Pastoral Care and Counseling," an argument is presented that the implicit reality of the Korean context needs to be unpacked and marital conflicts normalized so that women, along with men and children, can share their struggles in their families, seek help from inside and outside their families, ask various systems, such as churches and welfare systems, to provide effective programs for couples, and be referred to professional help if necessary. In addition, this chapter provides suggestions for practical/pastoral practices to not only care for women and men in conflictive and abusive marital relationships, but also to advocate for public discourse, new actions, ethics, and policies, and even transformation of the Korean family, society, and culture.

In Chapter 7, "Conclusion and Contribution," a final reflection along with suggestions for future research is presented.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature related to domestic violence discusses women's reasons for remaining in conflictive and abusive marital relationships in order to discover the causes of women's involvement in these relationships and their common traits and symptoms in these relationships. In this chapter, various discussions of women's reasons for remaining in conflictive and abusive marital relationships are reviewed over the course of three sections. The first section presents prevailing understandings from psychological perspectives, feminist and systemic approaches, and perspectives on religion of women who remain in marital conflicts and domestic violence situations. The second section reveals different perspectives for looking at women and women's decision-making processes based on critiques of the arguments discussed in the first section; these critiques help to develop the basis of this dissertation. The third section presents Korean women's reasons for remaining in conflictive and abusive marital relationships as discussed in the literature.

Women's Reasons for Remaining in Conflictive and Abusive Marital Relationships

Psychological Perspectives

The earliest psychological understandings, including psychoanalytic perspectives, of domestic violence usually attributed the cause of women's involvement in conflictive and abusive marital relationships to individual psychopathology, which means "both victim and perpetrator were labeled pathological."¹ For example, victims,

¹ Wendy Greenspun, "Embracing the Controversy: A Metasystemic Approach to the Treatment of Domestic Violence," in *Couples on the Fault Line: New Directions for Therapists*, ed. Peggy Papp (New York: Guilford Press, 2000), 153.

mostly female, were considered “masochistic,” and abusers were regarded as having “poor impulse control.”² However, recent literature indicates that seeing victims as masochistic is a myth, and now there are discussions of the “typical behaviors and feelings that are apt to develop and be exhibited” in women who experience domestic violence that explore their reasons for staying in abusive relationships in less pathological terms.³

One of the main reasons for remaining in an abusive or conflictive relationship that was often indicated in the literature is women’s low self-esteem. Patricia Riddle Gaddis asserts that low self-esteem makes it harder for women to leave abusive relationships as well as to get help, because women with low self-esteem often blame themselves for their experiences of marital conflicts and domestic violence.⁴ Grant Martin states that their “lack of self-worth makes [them] vulnerable” to various kinds of abuse by their husbands, and ongoing emotional and verbal abuse can make women think that they deserve to be abused for being “stupid, worthless, incompetent, bad wives, and poor mothers.”⁵ Women’s low self-esteem is also connected to women’s emotional dependency on their husbands in that women with low self-esteem continue to stay with or repeatedly return to their abusive husbands.

A second reason for women’s remaining in abusive relationships that is presented in the literature is women’s feelings of fear, shame, and guilt. Fear is considered to play various roles for women who stay with their abusive husbands. Gaddis argues that some

² Greenspun, 153.

³ Harway and Hansen, 21-23; Gelles, 2-12; Patricia Riddle Gaddis, *Battered But Not Broken: Help for Abused Wives and Their Church Families* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1996), 14-16; Grant L. Martin, *Counseling for Family Violence and Abuse* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 9, 38-43.

⁴ Gaddis, 14-15.

⁵ Martin, 39.

women decide to stay because they fear certain changes in their lives, such as losing their children, including losing custody, after leaving their marital relationships or getting divorced.⁶ For some, “fear of retaliation” is a reason for staying.⁷ In addition, Martin and Gaddis both mention that abused women are often socially withdrawn and isolated: either they have been cut off from others by their husbands or they have isolated themselves because they fear that their family and friends will learn of their marital conflicts and abusive relationships and blame them for the situation.⁸ Martin maintains that some women feel guilt and shame in the face of their husband’s abuse because they feel they did not do what their husbands wanted them to do and they did not make their best efforts to “make the violence stop” and make their marriage work.⁹ In short, women often blame themselves for what happens to them. Feelings of guilt and shame related to religious influence will be discussed in the later part of this section.

Much of the literature on domestic violence also names love, or “traumatic bond,” and hope, which could be unrealistic, as important aspects of women’s decisions to remain.¹⁰ Martin and Gaddis assert that women still love and feel “responsible” for their abusive husbands in spite of their suffering.¹¹ Gaddis states, women “love their husbands, feel sorry for them and their violent behavior, and want to help them.”¹² Some women believe that their abusive husbands will change “if they hang in there long enough,” or if they do their best to make their marriage work.¹³ Martin calls women’s

⁶ Gaddis, 11-12.

⁷ Gaddis, 14.

⁸ Martin, 41; Gaddis, 16.

⁹ Martin, 39-40.

¹⁰ Martin, 40.

¹¹ Martin, 40; Gaddis, 16.

¹² Gaddis, 16.

¹³ Martin, 40.

love for their husbands “traumatic bonding” and women’s hope for change “unrealistic hope.”¹⁴

Along with the psychological aspects of women’s reasons for staying, as indicated by Gaddis and Harway and Hansen, women’s concerns regarding financial resources and children play significant roles in deciding to remain in marital conflicts and abusive relationships.¹⁵ Gaddis points out that “financial concerns for themselves and also for their children hold many women captive to abusive partners.”¹⁶ Some might have become financially dependent on their husbands, some might not have enough education, skills or experience to obtain employment with a livable wage, and some might not want to become a single parent, in that they have to both financially provide for their families and take sole responsibility for the care of their children.¹⁷ For this reason, as indicated by Gaddis, some women may feel that it is better for them to stay with their husbands, who at least may provide food, clothing, and decent housing for them and their children.¹⁸ Along with financial concerns, some women decide to stay “for the sake of the children.”¹⁹ Women often think that it is better for their children to live with their biological father, rather than a stepfather or single parent.

Much research has been conducted to trace the typical feelings and behaviors of women experiencing domestic violence. Even though the conclusions of these studies do not consider women masochistic anymore, they still try to discover common traits and symptoms in abused women in order to ascertain “predisposing factors” or personality

¹⁴ Martin, 40.

¹⁵ Gaddis, 15; Harway and Hansen, 25.

¹⁶ Gaddis, 15.

¹⁷ Martin, 41.

¹⁸ Gaddis, 15.

¹⁹ Harway and Hansen, 25.

types that correlate with women becoming victims of domestic violence or remaining in abusive relationships in spite of their afflictions.²⁰ Based on these psychological studies, women in marital conflicts, including domestic violence situations, have been considered to have low self-esteem, emotional and financial dependency, emotional insecurity, traumatic bonds, and unrealistic hopes. These aspects in the Korean context will be reviewed in the later section of this chapter.

Feminist and Systemic Approaches

While psychological studies have described women's reasons for remaining in their abusive relationships based on their typical feelings and behaviors, feminist and systemic approaches have examined various factors that lead to marital conflicts and domestic violence and also affect women's feelings and thoughts in their marital relationships.²¹ Feminist approaches have drawn attention to issues of gender and power, which are considered to be "the ultimate root[s] of intimate violence."²² Regarding gender issues, feminist approaches emphasize examining "historical traditions of the patriarchal family, contemporary constructions of masculinity and femininity, and structural constraints" as reasons for women staying in abusive marriages.²³ Based on the traditional view of marriage, women may value marriage itself and do not want to break

²⁰ Harway and Hansen, 23.

²¹ Harway and Hansen, 23.

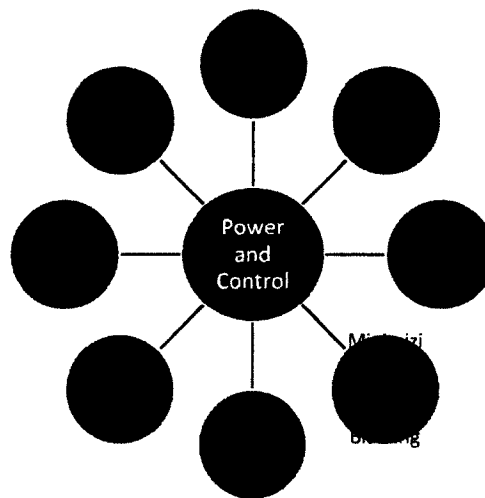
²² Kristin L. Anderson, "Gender, Status, and Domestic Violence: An Integration of Feminist and Family Violence Approaches," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 59 (1997): 655. Literature exemplifying feminist perspectives on gender and power in terms of domestic violence includes: Russell P. Dobash, and Rebecca E. Dobash, *Violence against Wives: A Case against the Patriarchy* (New York: Free Press, 1979); Evan Stark and Anne Flitcraft, *Women at Risk: Domestic Violence and Women's Health* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996); Kersti Yllo, "Through a Feminist Lens: Gender, Power, and Violence," in *Current Controversies on Family Violence*, ed. Richard J. Gelles and Donileen R. Loseke (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1993).

²³ Michael P. Johnson, 284.

their marriage vow, no matter what.²⁴ Women may feel responsible for maintaining their marriages and think that their marital conflicts indicate their failure as wives and mothers.²⁵ For such reasons, some women try to fulfill their traditional marital roles in spite of marital difficulties.²⁶ In addition, gender-role stereotypes and general notions of masculinity and femininity are also considered to contribute to domestic violence and its continuation.²⁷ As indicated by feminist approaches, women often value marriage itself and feel responsible for maintaining their marriages in spite of marital difficulties based on the traditional view of marriage.²⁸

Regarding issues of power, the Violence Wheel (Figure 1) has often been used to explain the power dynamics in marital conflicts and domestic violence. As seen at the center of the violence wheel, “power and control” are considered to be the dominant mechanisms at work in domestic violence.²⁹

Figure1. Violence Wheel³⁰



²⁴ Gaddis, 16.

²⁵ Martin, 42.

²⁶ Martin, 42.

²⁷ Harway and Hansen, 4.

²⁸ Gaddis, 16. Martin, 42.

²⁹ Gaddis, 21.

³⁰ Gaddis, 21

In reflecting on domestic violence from feminist perspectives, Michael Johnson distinguishes between two “distinct forms of couple violence”: one is “occasional outbursts of violence” from either or both spouses and the other is “systematic male violence enacted in the service of patriarchal control.”³¹ According to Johnson, since “patriarchal terrorism” is based on “a motive to exercise general control over one’s partner,” physical or instrumental violence does not need to be present in the relationship.³² Therefore, feminist approaches assert that it is necessary to examine the role of patriarchy in couple violence and name patriarchal terrorism when it is found.³³

Systemic approaches try to examine the many variables that can affect marital conflicts, such as age, cohabitation status, employment, education, socioeconomic status, social structure, and culture. In systemic approaches, patriarchy becomes “one variable in a complex constellation of causes.”³⁴ In addition, systemic approaches, along with feminist approaches, take into consideration the reciprocal relationships between individuals and their structural contexts that are associated with marital conflicts and domestic violence. As an example, in reflecting on relational difficulties, family systems approaches discuss the causes of domestic violence and argue that “problems were created and/or maintained within the context of a relational system.”³⁵ Therefore, couples, both husbands and wives, are considered as possibly playing equal roles in family conflicts and domestic violence.³⁶ For this reason, family therapists have provided treatment approaches that include teaching conversation skills, conflict management

³¹ Michael P. Johnson, 283.

³² Michael P. Johnson, 287.

³³ Michael P. Johnson, 283-84. 287.

³⁴ Kristin L. Anderson, 655.

³⁵ Greenspun, 154.

³⁶ Greenspun, 154.

skills, and anger management skills. However, these perspectives have also been criticized since they are based on the misperception that all persons in the family system can have equal power and influence and overlook power imbalances in couple dynamics; men tend to have more power and influence than women.

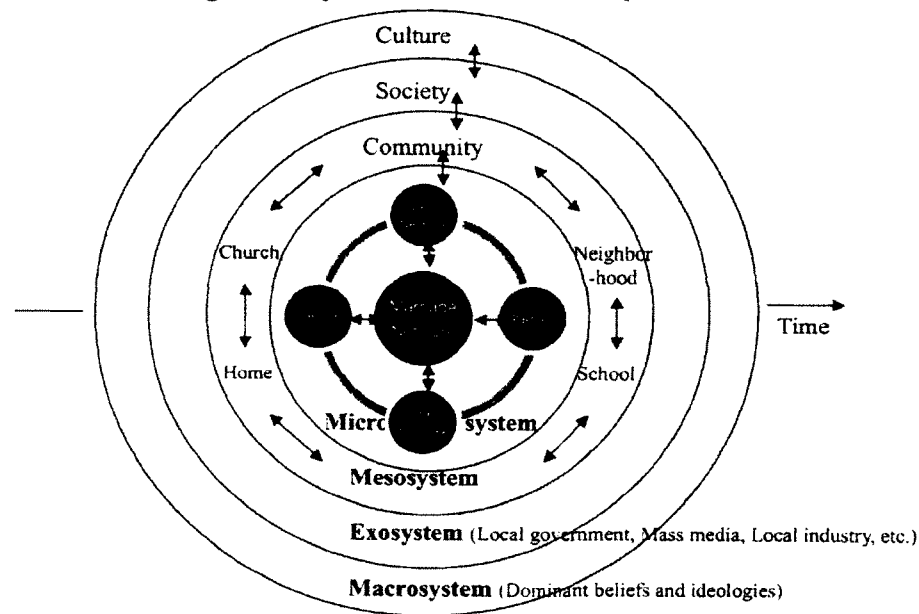
In addition to the reciprocal relationship between couples, a Systemic Model for Couples (Figure 2) is designed not only to examine various systems or contexts surrounding individuals and couples, but also to explore the reciprocal relationship between individuals or couples and various systems. In Figure 2, on the next page, I have integrated and modified both Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological model and Richard Lerner's developmental contextual model.³⁷ Women's reasons for staying in abusive relationships could be reflected in relation to various aspects, as indicated..

As examples, first, women can be expected to adopt gender-biased roles, as indicated by feminist approaches in the multiple layers of the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro-systems, which are reciprocally related. In other words, gender-biased roles might be imposed on women by their husbands, their parents or parents-in-laws, the churches they attend, and or the society and culture to which they belong. In this situation, it will be hard for a woman to break from the beliefs and roles that were constructed from

³⁷ Richard M. Lerner, Francine Jacobs, and Donald Wertlieb, *Applied Developmental Science: An Advanced Textbook* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005), 173; Nebraska Symposium on Motivation: Cross-Cultural Perspectives, 1989, vol. 37. Ed. John J. Berman (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 290. Bronfenbrenner's definitions of these four systems are as follows: (1) "A microsystem is a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics;" (2) "A mesosystem comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates (such as..., for an adult, among family, work, and social life);" (3) "A exosystem refers to one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person;" (4) "The macrosystem refers to consistencies, in the form and content of lower-order systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-) that exist, or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies." Urie Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 22-26.

multiple influences. Second, even if women consider leaving their marital relationships, they will also need to take into consideration whether they will gain the assistance they need when they reach out for help from family members, friends, religious leaders, police departments, and other social institutions.³⁸ Wendy Greenspun indicates that some women decide to remain because they have experienced inappropriate attention and inadequate help from other people, including family members and police officers, who consider marital conflict and domestic violence to be private matters, or “domestic disputes,” and ask the women to do their best to have better marital relationships.³⁹

Figure 2: Systemic Model for Couples



In addition, the limited space in shelter programs and difficulty to find safe places and to access necessary resources, such as job search assistance and childcare services, can result in women going back to their husbands.⁴⁰ Even if women find safe spaces to live, they will confront issues in accessing necessary resources, such as job training, job search

³⁸ Greenspun, 153.

³⁹ Greenspun, 153.

⁴⁰ Gaddis, xiv, 15.

assistance, and childcare services.⁴¹

Feminist and systemic approaches draw attention to the fact that various systems and the reciprocal relationships contained within them affect women's lives, their roles, and their decision-making processes. Based on these approaches, in the macro-systemic dimension it is important to reflect on the social stigmas attached to women who have been in abusive relationships, to divorced women, to single mothers, and/or to remarried women in their particular contexts. In addition, these approaches advocate investigating the support systems and resources that are available for women in their contexts and the practices of these organizations and systems, since lack of resources and lack of information about supportive networks in their micro-, meso-, and exo-systems could be other reasons why women decide to stay in abusive relationships.⁴²

Perspectives on Religion

In systemic approaches, religion or religious beliefs are considered to be one among the various systems that can affect women's reasons for staying in abusive relationships. For women with religious affiliations, their reasons for remaining in their marriages are strongly related to their beliefs and the teachings of their religious groups, not infrequently based on dubious theological interpretation and with negative effects. In the case of Protestant Christianity, women have often been encouraged to be patient in dealing with their life challenges, to repent for not being good-enough Christians and wives, and to forgive and love their neighbors, families, and enemies. As indicated earlier, women in churches have learned to value marriage for itself and to fulfill their

⁴¹ Gaddis, 15.

⁴² Gaddis, 15. These aspects in the Korean context will be reviewed in a later section of this chapter. They will also be addressed when the interview data is presented and through a general survey of resources and policies in Korean society, especially in Chapters 4 and 6.

traditional roles as caretakers. Furthermore, when women reach out to their pastors for help, according to Gaddis, “churches still most often fail to assist the victim of abuse and, in many cases, worsen the problem by blaming the victim.”⁴³ When women reveal their experiences of marital conflict and domestic violence, they are often encouraged to “pray harder,” to increase their efforts to become “a better wife,” and “to change within the marital relationship.”⁴⁴ Pastors and church leaders who are in leadership roles tend to tolerate domestic violence or avoid discussing marital conflicts and domestic violence.⁴⁵ In addition, divorce is often taught to be prohibited based on common interpretations of particular passages in the New Testament: Matthew 5:31-32, 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; and 1 Corinthians 7:10-11.⁴⁶ It could be said that Christian women experience a stronger level of bias against divorce than non-Christian women do. Women anticipate feeling guilty about getting divorced and thereby becoming sinners. In other words, Christian women who contemplate divorce feel they would no longer fit into their religious group, if it teaches that divorce is not allowed. Therefore, some Christian women decide to remain in the midst of suffering in order to not feel guilty and experience social discrimination, as well as to not be alienated from their faith communities.

In examining religious influences on women’s decisions for remaining in abusive relationships, some secular feminists categorically reject religious traditions and criticize the patriarchal structures of churches and teachings on gender-biased roles, especially

⁴³ Gaddis, xii.

⁴⁴ Gaddis, xiii.

⁴⁵ Gaddis, 8-9.

⁴⁶ Seung Ai Yang, “Has Jesus ever Condemned Divorce? An Intercultural Interpretation of Jesus’ Saying on Divorce,” in *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North American Women’s Religion and Theology*, ed. Rita Nakashima Brock, Jung Ha Kim, Kwok Pui-Lan, and Seung Ai Yang (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 254.

“the so-called headship” of men that is based on selected scriptures (Eph. 5:23; Col. 3:18; and 1 Peter 3:1).⁴⁷ Religious feminists, such as Rev. Dr. Marie Fortune, suggest that women in conflictive and abusive relationships avoid pastors who offer unhelpful advice, such as “submit to your husband; pray harder; try to get your husband to church; be a better Christian wife; lift up the abuse to the Lord; forgive your abuser and take him back.”⁴⁸ Fortune also argues that “there is no virtue in enduring suffering . . . because the family is already broken apart by the abuse.”⁴⁹ For Fortune, teachings on endurance are based on a “doormat theology” that explains human suffering as God’s will and says the way to deal with suffering is endurance.⁵⁰ Based on this argument, some feminists criticize “unjustified sacrifices by women in deference to men.”⁵¹ As a result, religions and religious communities with patriarchal systems and gender-biased teachings are considered to affect women’s lives and their decision-making processes in dealing with marital conflicts and domestic violence negatively.⁵²

Critics

In dealing with marital conflicts and domestic violence, psychological research has mainly examined women’s “typical behaviors and feelings that are apt to develop and be exhibited,” and feminist and systemic approaches have focused on how various systems have affected women’s lives, their roles, and their decision-making processes. While the arguments of these disciplines have prevailed in understanding and discussing

⁴⁷ Kristin L. Anderson, 655; Browning et al., 131.

⁴⁸ Marie M. Fortune, *Keeping the Faith: Guidance for Christian Women Facing Abuse* (New York: HarperOne, 1987), 88.

⁴⁹ Marie M. Fortune, “The Transformation of Suffering: A Biblical and Theological Perspective,” in *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, ed. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989), 144.

⁵⁰ Fortune, 144.

⁵¹ Don Browning et al., 161.

⁵² These aspects in the Korean context will be reviewed in the later section of this chapter.

women in their marital suffering, in this section, I would like to contemplate different perspectives for looking at women and women's decision-making processes. The perspectives presented in this section will be based on critiques of the arguments discussed in the previous sections and are more likely to provide "a positive re-description of the meaning of staying" for women in marital conflicts and abusive relationships.⁵³

Critics of Psychology and Individualism

When it comes to marital issues along with individual issues, psychologists and therapists have advocated individuals' rights, self-realization, and self-fulfillment in order to resolve problems related to conflictive and abusive relationships. When it comes to domestic violence, women have been considered to have low self-esteem and emotional/financial dependency and have been encouraged to leave their marriages for their own safety, self-realization, and self-fulfillment. However, some scholars have criticized the psychological and therapeutic tendency toward "a psychologically grounded ethic of individualism" because of its negative impact on individuals, families, and communities.⁵⁴

Among the many critics of individual psychology, Christopher Lasch in *Haven in a Heartless World* and *The Culture of Narcissism* and Paul Vitz in *Psychology as Religion: The Cult of Self-Worship* are early and prominent critics of individual psychology and therapeutic culture.⁵⁵ Lasch argues that psychology and mental health

⁵³ Goldner et al., 9.

⁵⁴ Browning et al., 190.

⁵⁵ Paul C. Vitz, *Psychology as Religion: The Cult of Self-Worship* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1977); Christopher Lasch, *Heaven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* (New York: Basic Books, 1977); Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: Norton, 1978). Literature listed by Vitz as critiques of psychology are as follows: David G. Myers, *The Inflated Self* (New York: Seabury, 1981); Michael

professionals take over the roles of “parental, legal, and religious authority” and vitiate individuals’ and families’ abilities to cope with their situations by naming them “passive, dependent, and sick.”⁵⁶ Vitz also criticizes modern self-psychology by arguing that “it has become a religion: a secular cult of the self.”⁵⁷ By emphasizing self-expression, self-esteem, self-actualization, and self-fulfillment, psychology has advocated “selfism” as a humanistic self-theory and has negatively affected individuals as well as families and communities.⁵⁸ According to Vitz, devaluing family or “the anti-family effects of selfism” has resulted in the disruption of families and even divorce and also has disrupted the women’s lives by undermining relationships they value.⁵⁹ Furthermore, selfism makes individuals see themselves as “victims” and they are more likely to attribute the source of their problems to others.⁶⁰ As a result, according to Vitz, psychology’s advocating of selfism leads people to be hostile to and isolated from families and undermines “social

Wallach and Lise Wallach, *Psychology’s Sanction for Selfishness: The Error of Egoism in Theory and Therapy* (San Francisco: Freeman, 1983); Thomas Szasz, *The Myth of Psychotherapy: Mental Healing as Religion, Rhetoric, and Repression* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1978); Martin L. Gross, *The Psychological Society* (New York: Random House, 1978); Richard D. Rosen, *Psychobabble* (New York: Avon, 1979); Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966); E. Fuller Torrey, *Freudian Fraud* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992); Martin Bobgan and Deidre Bobgan, *The Psychological Way/The Spiritual Way: Are Christianity and Psychotherapy Compatible?* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1978); Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice: A Christian Looks at the Changing Face of Psychology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1982); William Kirk Kilpatrick, *Psychological Seduction: The Failure of Modern Psychology* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982); William D. Hunter and T. A. McMahon, *The Seduction of Christianity Spiritual Discernment in the Last Days* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1985); Don Browning, *Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); Os Guinness and John Seel, *No God But God: Breaking with the Idols of Our Age* (Chicago: Moody, 1992); Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1972).

⁵⁶ Browning et al., 192; Lasch, *Heaven in a Heartless World*, 19.

⁵⁷ Vitz, xii.

⁵⁸ Vitz, xviii, 32. According to Vitz, Humanistic self-theories were theories mainly demonstrated by Carl Jung, Erich Fromm, Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, and Rollo May. Vitz, 1.

⁵⁹ Vitz, 59-60.

⁶⁰ Vitz, 60-65. As an example, according to Vitz, Freud’s Oedipus complex focuses on “an intense hatred between father and son” without considering the father’s love, and recent psychological approaches have drawn attention to the relationship between mothers and children and blamed the bad-mother concept as a source of various problems.

bonds as expressed in tradition, community structures, and the family.”⁶¹

Since self-esteem is thought to be “essential to happiness,” and “low self-esteem” has been considered to be “a major cause” of all problems, individuals try to work on their self-esteem even though they do not know what they need to attain and how to achieve it.⁶² Vitz raises questions about self-esteem by asking what is the “real self” or the “true self” among “the various selves” and how self-esteem can be measured and achieved.⁶³ Vitz indicates that the meaning of “self” is “a social construct” in that the meaning can be changed by “the group” or “social and historical conditions.”⁶⁴ Vitz also mentions that “self-esteem should be understood as a response, not as a cause.”⁶⁵

Along with critics of psychology, some sociologists have assessed individualism’s negative aspects. As an example, in *Habits of the Heart*, Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven Tipton criticize “expressive individualism” in intimate relationships and communicate how excessive individualism results in disruption and destruction of family life.⁶⁶ As a result of qualitative interviews with about two hundred white, middle-class Americans, they discovered particular characteristics they named “the habits of the heart”: namely, that they seek and value “self-fulfillment, autonomy, and self-reliance.”⁶⁷ Even though the arguments in these books are mainly focused on self-psychology and individual therapy based on a psychologically grounded ethic of individualism, these perspectives draw attention to prevailing understandings of

⁶¹ Vitz, 66.

⁶² Vitz, 16, 19, 54.

⁶³ Vitz, 16-17, 48.

⁶⁴ Vitz, 49.

⁶⁵ Vitz, 19.

⁶⁶ Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swidler and Steven Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 27, vii. Cited in Browning et al., 58.

⁶⁷ Browning et al., 192; Bellah et al., 55-84.

and common intervention plans for women who remain in marital conflicts and domestic violence situations.

Looking at such arguments, it becomes clear that psychologists and therapists have overemphasized low self-esteem as a cause of women remaining in conflictive and abusive relationships, and they have neglected other possible reasons. In particular, this shows a tendency to underestimate women's abilities to cope with their situations and a lack of recognition that it is a sign of their strength that their marriages, their children, and their social bonds are as important to them as their individual well-being.

Overemphasizing self-esteem and self-actualization has resulted in helping professionals as well as women seeing themselves as dependent beings and/or victims who passively remained in conflictive and abusive relationships. In addition, such overemphasis may lead them to set aside other values they hold, including their families and children, in order to achieve their own self-fulfillment. This trend leads women to make decisions to leave their conflictive and abusive marriages, since these marriages are considered to be keeping them from achieving self-expression and self-realization. Critics of individualistic psychology and individualism encourage reflection on the tendency to criticize women as passive and as having low self-esteem and the raising of questions about what it means to have self-esteem and be self-actualized, which are often the goals set for women experiencing marital conflicts and domestic violence. These critics facilitate the acknowledgement that women's possible low self-esteem could be the result of their experiences of ongoing conflicts and violence, rather than the cause. They also advocate that it is necessary to question the meaning of "self-esteem" by reflecting on the idea that self-esteem's meaning can be different depending on individuals and the

contexts individuals belong to. Likewise, previously accepted ways of measuring and achieving self-esteem need to be reconsidered.

Relational Feminism and Relational Cultural Theory (RCT)

While women who remain in abusive relationships have been considered victims, with the various negative connotations that go with such a label, some scholars have challenged the understanding of women as victims and provided different perspectives on the psychology and development of such women. E. W. Gondolf and E. R. Fisher in *Battered Women as Survivors* argue that battered women have actively worked on their marital relationships not as victims, but as survivors; therefore, they deserve to be respected.⁶⁸ V. Goldner et al., also observed in interviews with couples who wanted to stay together in spite of their abusive relationships that women “in nearly every case” were more likely to be seen not as “timid, self-deprecating, fragile victims” by the researchers, but as “women of substance who had strong opinions and conveyed a sense of personal power.”⁶⁹ Even though their relationships looked dangerous and destructive, women decided to stay in them in order “to hold connections together, to heal and care for another, no matter what the personal cost.”⁷⁰

The main perspective behind this argument is that women develop “a sense of self, of self-worth, and of feminine identity through their ability to build and maintain relationships with others.”⁷¹ In other words, for some women, their reason for staying is related to “an affirmation of the feminine ideal” and their “socialization toward making

⁶⁸ Edward W. Gondolf and Ellen R. Fisher, *Battered Women as Survivors: An Alternative to Treating Learned Helplessness* (Lexington, MA.: Lexington Books, 1998), 91-104. Cited in Insook Kim et al., 여성복지론[Social welfare for women] (Seoul: Nanam Press, 2000), 287.

⁶⁹ Goldner et al., 9.

⁷⁰ Goldner et al., 9.

⁷¹ Goldner et al., 9.

relationships work.”⁷² This perspective is based on what is called “relational feminism,” which is differentiated from “individualist feminism,” according to Karen Offen.⁷³ While individualist feminism emphasizes “personal autonomy, choice, [and] self-realization” and devalues “motherhood, relationships with men,” and childcare, relational feminism pays attention not only to women’s equality, which “encompassed sexual differences,” but also to “human relationality as continuity in difference,” especially within women’s experiences of motherhood.⁷⁴

Feminist perspectives on family issues are often considered by people as “stereotypes, cast as monolithic, and misunderstood,” because what is portrayed are generalizations of individualistic feminist ideas, which can be seen as “egotistic, individualistic, anti-men, anti-children, or antireligious.”⁷⁵ Therefore, some women’s as well as men’s concern with and resistance to feminism is mainly based on the influence of individualist feminism. In *Feminism Is Not the Story of My Life*, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese describes the reasons why many women hesitate to define themselves as feminists, even though they have “benefited from feminist gains” and even worked to achieve some of the women’s rights that feminists have proclaimed.⁷⁶ According to Fox-Genovese, these women have thought that “feminism was not talking about their lives” in that they still value binding ties to their families, husbands, and children, along with their independence and individual rights.⁷⁷ Such women think that feminism cares mainly

⁷² Goldner et al., 9; Greenspun, 154.

⁷³ Karen Offen, “Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 14, no. 1 (1988): 119-57. Cited in Browning et al., 163.

⁷⁴ Browning et al., 164, 166.

⁷⁵ Browning et al., 161.

⁷⁶ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Feminism is not the Story of My Life: How Today’s Feminist Elite has lost Touch with the Real Concerns of Women* (New York: Anchor Books, 1996), 2.

⁷⁷ Fox-Genovese, 2-3.

about political issues and policies, such as “pro-choice and pro-life,” rather than women’s real concerns in their daily lives.⁷⁸ According to Fox-Genovese, the main failure of feminism, that is, individualistic feminism, is its excessive focus on “women as independent agents rather than as members of families.”⁷⁹

Relational feminists try to articulate a psychology of women in human development theories that is based on women’s real experiences, rather than adopting developmental theories worked out by male scholars based on the experiences of men. In her book *In a Different Voice*, Carol Gilligan argues that the moral development theories of Piaget and Kohlberg are based on men’s “moral reasoning” and cannot be simply accepted as representative of women’s moral development.⁸⁰ In listening to women’s experiences, Gilligan found that many women develop their moralities based on “notions of responsibility and care,” rather than on a “morality of rights” and justice, which was foundational to the moral system presented by Piaget and Kohlberg.⁸¹ Gilligan found that women try to understand “the context of moral choice” when facing moral dilemmas, and their decisions are made “inductively from the particular experiences each participant brings to the situation.”⁸² Supporting Gilligan’s work, Nona Plessner Lyons found through her research that responsibility-oriented people develop their “conceptions of self” or identity “in a sense of connection and relatedness to others,” while rights-oriented people develop their identity “in terms of separation and autonomy.”⁸³

⁷⁸ Fox-Genovese, 17, 25.

⁷⁹ Fox-Genovese, 28.

⁸⁰ Mary F. Belenky, Blythe M. Clinchy, Nancy R. Goldberger, and Jill M. Tarule, *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 8.

⁸¹ Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), xiii; Belenky et al., 6, 8.

⁸² Belenky et al., 8.

⁸³ Nona Plessner Lyons, “Two Perspectives on Self, Relationships, and Morality,” *Harvard Educational Review*, 53 (1983): 125-45. Cited in Belenky et al., 8.

Jean Baker Miller, Judith Jordan, Irene Stiver, Janet Surrey, and Alexandra Kaplan, feminist psychotherapists and the primary originators of relational cultural theory (RCT), have also challenged “the prevailing traditional developmental theories” that emphasize autonomy and depict independence as “the hallmark of mature development.”⁸⁴ Miller and her colleagues name women’s existence as a “being in relation” and stress human connectedness and relatedness.⁸⁵ The core concept of RCT is that “human beings grow through and toward connection” throughout their lives, and the majority of suffering for human beings is based on “isolation” or “disconnection.”⁸⁶ They acknowledge that some scholars criticize the RCT perspective by claiming that the focus on connection supports people staying in “all sorts of relationships, including hurtful, imbalanced, nonmutual, possibly abusive ones.”⁸⁷ Jordan responds to this criticism by saying that the notion of RCT helps individuals to “differentiate what is growth-fostering from what is destructive” and supports them in working on the “disconnections” in their relationships.⁸⁸

While individualist feminists, along with the traditional developmental psychologists, value “the development of autonomy, independence, abstract critical thought, and the unfolding of a morality of rights and justice” for both men and women, relational feminists’ arguments challenge people to pay attention to “the development of interdependency, intimacy, nurturance, and contextual thought” in all human beings.⁸⁹ According to Gaddis and Greenspun, many women in abusive relationships do not want

⁸⁴ Jordan, *Relational-Cultural Therapy*, 1.

⁸⁵ Judith V. Jordan, “A Relational Perspective for Understanding Women’s Development,” in *Women’s Growth in Diversity* (New York: Guilford Press, 1997), 14.

⁸⁶ Jordan, *Relational-Cultural Therapy*, 1.

⁸⁷ Jordan, *Relational-Cultural Therapy*, 97.

⁸⁸ Jordan, *Relational-Cultural Therapy*, 97.

⁸⁹ Belenky et al., 6-7.

to end their marriages, but to stop the violence in their married lives.⁹⁰ Relational feminists' perspectives encourage acknowledging and valuing women's "ongoing need for connection" and their desire to work on their relationships.⁹¹ While women in abusive relationships are often criticized for not being able to separate themselves from their partners, relational feminist approaches help to advocate that women's decisions need to be considered as ways of affirming their identities and practicing their agency rather than as deficiencies in dealing with their situations in respecting women's life values and experiences.

Religion and Spirituality as Coping Strategies and Resilience

Patriarchal systems and gender-biased teachings in religious communities have been criticized as negatively affecting women's beliefs, roles, and lives. Religion and religious practices have also been considered passive defense mechanisms used by women to reduce their anxiety and tension or as methods of repression, denial, and avoidance of the realities of their situations.⁹² The potentially positive role of religion and religious practices has been neglected and underestimated in the field of psychology and by mental health professionals.⁹³ However, recent studies about coping strategies and resilience have paid attention to the roles of religion and spirituality for individuals in times of difficulty, crisis, or trauma, with these roles being taken seriously mainly in the field of practical theology, especially pastoral counseling.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Gaddis, 14; Greenspun, 157.

⁹¹ Jordan, *Relational-Cultural Therapy*, 97.

⁹² Kenneth I. Pargament, *The Psychology of Religion and Coping: Theory, Research, and Practice* (New York: Guilford Press, 1997), 167.

⁹³ Pargament, 4.

⁹⁴ The terms religion and spirituality have been used interchangeably even though they are defined differently. According to Froma Walsh, religion is defined as "an organized, institutionalized belief system, set of practices, and faith community," and spirituality is considered "a dimension of human experience involving personal transcendent beliefs and practices, within or outside formal religion, through

Coping strategies are defined as “a complex set of processes that may moderate influences of stressful life events,” and they are developed when dealing with or in response to adversity and stress.⁹⁵ Coping strategies, as “inner and external resources,” include the abilities to problem solve and use social and communal support systems.⁹⁶ In times of difficulty and crisis, people often turn not only to their inner religious and spiritual beliefs, but also to their religious communities, religious leaders, or religious and spiritual practices. Many research studies indicate that women experiencing domestic violence often seek resources for coping from their religions and spirituality to help them decide whether to live with or leave their abusive partners.⁹⁷ Research by William Fiala, Jeffery Bjorck, and Richard Gorsuch revealed three types of support—“God support, congregational support, and church leader support”—that women sought from their

family and cultural heritage, and in connection with nature and humanity.” Since they are not “mutually exclusive,” but “associated with internal processes and traits, as well as outward manifestations of those inner qualities,” as indicated by Fowler and Rountree, in this section, religion, religious practices, and spirituality will be taken into consideration in the discussion of human coping strategies and resilience. More discussion on the meanings and differences among these terms will be discussed in the Chapter 5. Walsh, “Family Resilience,” 5; Fowler and Rountree, 2.

⁹⁵ Lu and Chen, 297-308. Cited in Davis, “The Strongest Women,” 1249.

⁹⁶ Davis, 1249.

⁹⁷ Tameka L. Gillum, Cris M. Sullivan, and Deborah I. Bybee, “The Importance of Spirituality in the Lives of Domestic Violence Survivors,” *Violence against Women* 12, no. 3 (2006): 240. Additional research on women’s spirituality in relation to domestic violence includes the following: Reinhild Boehm, Judith Golec, and Dianne Smyth, *Lifeline: Culture, Spirituality, and Family Violence* (Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: University of Alberta Press, 1999); Dianna Dunbar and Nancy Jeannechild, “The Stories and Strength of Women who leave battering relationships,” *Journal of Couples Therapy* 6 (1996): 149-73; Norman Giesbrecht and Irene Sevcik, “The Process of Recovery and Rebuilding among Abused Women in the Conservative Evangelic Subculture,” *Journal of Family Violence* 15 (2000): 229-48; Christina G. Watlington and Christopher M. Murphy, “The Roles of Religion and Spirituality among African American Survivors of Domestic Violence,” *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 72, no. 7 (2006): 837-57; Jacqueline S. Mattis, “Religion and Spirituality in the Meaning-making and Coping Experiences of African American Women: A Qualitative Analysis,” *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 20 (2002): 309-21; Dena Hassouneh-Phillips, “Strength and Vulnerability: Spirituality in abused American Muslim Women’s Lives,” *Issues in Mental Health Nursing* 24 (2006): 681-94; Dawnovise N. Fowler & Hope M. Hill, “Social Support and Spirituality as Culturally Relevant Factors in Coping among African American Women Survivors of Partner Abuse,” *Violence against Women: An International and Interdisciplinary Journal* 10, no. 11 (2006): 1267-82.

religions and their religious communities.⁹⁸ These supports are “a source of strength or comfort” that help decrease depression and increase psychological well being for women.⁹⁹ Women experiencing domestic violence make use of various coping strategies from their religious traditions and spiritualities, not only to deal with marital violence, but also to be healed from it.

Studies on resilience have also given attention to religion and spirituality as protective factors when confronting life’s difficulties and challenges. “Resilience” can be defined as “the ability to respond or perform positively in the face of adversity, to achieve despite the presence of disadvantages, or to significantly exceed expectations under given negative circumstances.”¹⁰⁰ Initially, research studies on resilience focused on individual resilience, especially personal traits for resilience. In the theories that pay attention to the reciprocal relationships between individuals and their cultures or contexts there is now more of a focus on the influence of various factors at individual, familial, and communal levels and their interplay as persons deal with life challenges.¹⁰¹

Figure 3 presents Benzies and Mychasiuk’s overview of various aspects of resilience. Even though religion and spirituality are not indicated in this model, reflection on this chart reveals that their influence can be found on individual, familial, and communal levels. On the individual level, an individual’s religious beliefs and spirituality

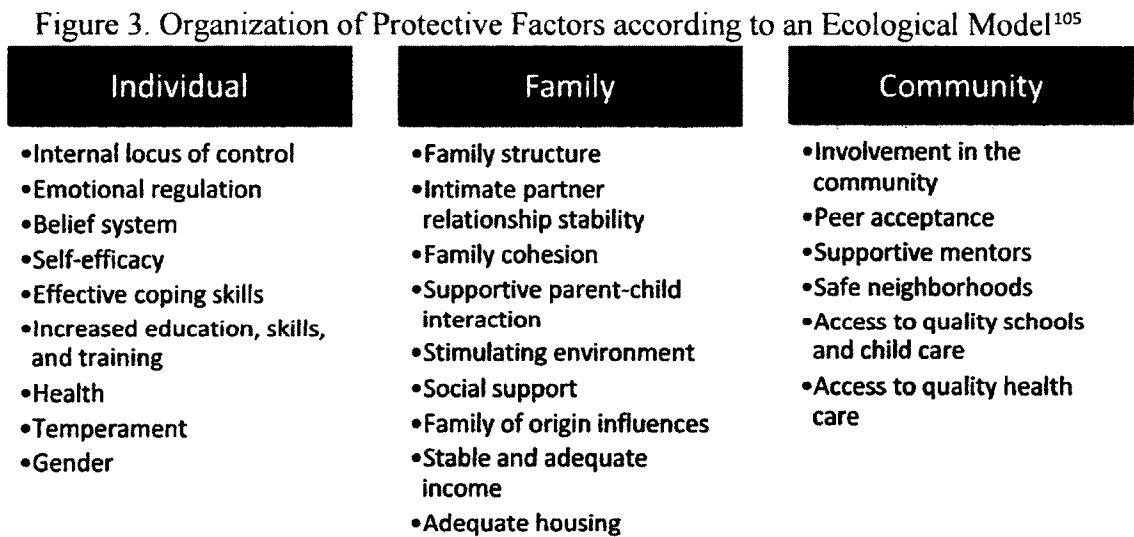
⁹⁸ William E. Fiala, Jeffery P. Bjorck, and Richard Gorsuch, “The Religious Support Scale: Construction, Validation, and Cross-Validation,” *American Journal of Community Psychology* 30 (2002): 761-86 Cited in Gillum et al., 240-41.

⁹⁹ Gillum et al., 240-41.

¹⁰⁰ Brennan, 55-64; Robbie Gilligan, 125-45.

¹⁰¹ Froma Walsh, “Family Resilience,” 1-2; Benzies and Mychasiuk, 105. Theories discussing the relationships between individuals and their cultures or contexts have been named systemic models, contextual models, or ecological models, and these names have been used interchangeably while some prefer to use a particular name to indicate their models. For example, Bronfenbrenner names his model a contextual or ecological model while Benzies and Mychasiuk name their model an ecological model, as seen in Figure 3.

can be understood in relation to belief systems as elements that can help one cope and foster a sense of meaning and purpose in the midst of crisis.¹⁰² Religion and spirituality not only help people understand the meanings of their sufferings and crises, but they also assist them in finding ways to solve the problems they are dealing with.¹⁰³ In other words, religion/religious practices and spirituality/spiritual practices can be understood as resources for “healing, recovery, and resilience” and for increasing self-efficacy and effective coping skills.¹⁰⁴



In addition, having shared belief systems in a family and receiving support from religious leaders and communities can serve as protective factors that contribute to individual and family resilience in dealing with family crises. Even without a particular religious affiliation, people have used religious and spiritual practices, such as prayer, meditation, and rituals, as resources for coping with suffering, struggles, and crises.

¹⁰² Benzies and Mychasiuk, 105.

¹⁰³ Walsh, “Family Resilience,” 5.

¹⁰⁴ Walsh, “Religion, Spirituality, and Family,” 3-4.

¹⁰⁵ Benzies and Mychasiuk, 105.

According to Walsh, individuals use prayers in order to have “strength, wisdom, or courage in facing life challenges,” which results in generating “feelings of hope and peace.”¹⁰⁶ In addition, rituals and ceremonies play roles in connecting individuals to others, families, and communities and also in “guiding them through life passages and times of adversity.”¹⁰⁷

In talking about women in marital conflicts and abusive relationships, scholars and practitioners have focused on personal psychological aspects and couples dynamics and undervalued women’s and families’ religious identities and spiritualities. However, Gaddis points out that negatively labeling women who stay in relationships of marital conflict and domestic violence may serve “to wrongly reprimand the victim,” and their recovery processes should be approached with supportive and nonjudgmental attitudes.¹⁰⁸ Discussion about women’s coping strategies and resilience leads to paying attention to women’s inner strengths and resources rather than considering women “helpless victims” and their “traits as weaknesses.”¹⁰⁹

In researching women in conflictive and abusive marital relationships, some psychological studies focus on their typical feelings, behaviors, and personality types, while studies based on feminist and systemic perspectives consider various systems, including family, society, culture, and religion, that have negatively affected women’s lives, roles, and decision-making processes. However, critics of individual psychology and individualism, the arguments by relational feminism and RCT, and the reappraisal of

¹⁰⁶ Walsh, “Religion, Spirituality, and Family,” 14.

¹⁰⁷ Walsh, “Religion, Spirituality, and Family,” 14; Evan Imber-Black, “Rituals and Spirituality in Family Therapy,” in *Spiritual Resources in Family Therapy*, ed. Froma Walsh (New York: Guilford Press, 2009), 229-46.

¹⁰⁸ Gaddis, 13-14.

¹⁰⁹ Davis, 1248, 1250.

religions and spirituality as coping strategies and resilience draw attention to what has been neglected and underestimated in all these discussions of women who have struggled in their marital conflicts and domestic violence. Discussions of these controversial issues are ongoing in relevant fields, and any one case or research project cannot possibly represent all women's experiences of marital conflict and domestic violence. Each woman's experience will be different from others, because each case will have arisen from "different societal roots and interpersonal dynamics."¹¹⁰ Through its approach to reflection on interviews with women, this dissertation will demonstrate a research method that reflects on various aspects that could be at play in each woman's life in order to understand them and their lives, conveying paradox and complexities in order to maximize effectiveness in helping them.

Korean Women's Reasons for Remaining in Conflictive and Abusive Marital Relationships

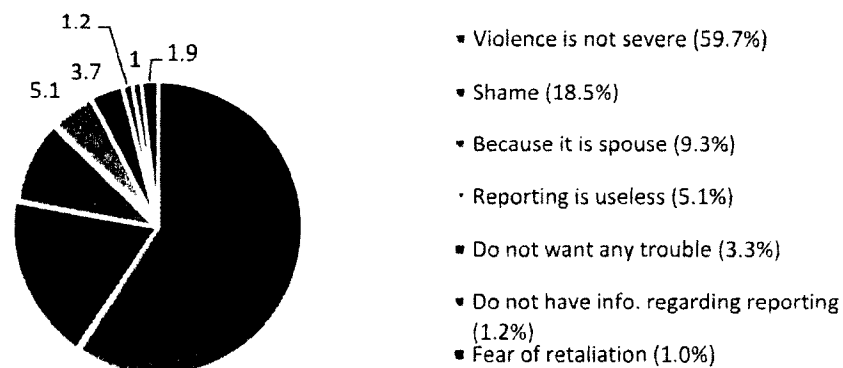
Issues related to domestic violence have been frequently discussed in the Korean context, but most of the research is concerned about the prevalence of domestic violence in the Korean family and the necessity of care for abusers and victims in the Korean church and society.¹¹¹ The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (여성가족부) in Korea has assessed the prevalence of domestic violence every three years since 2004 in order to

¹¹⁰ Michael P. Johnson, 293.

¹¹¹ Chulwoo Sohn, "Domestic Violence in Christian Family: The Church's Silence," *Korean Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* 12 (2009): 218-42; Min Soo Park, "가정폭력에 대한 목회적 돌봄과 상담 I"[Pastoral care and counseling in terms of domestic violence I], *Journal of Counseling and the Family* 112 (2007): 38-44; Min Soo Park, "가정폭력에 대한 목회적 돌봄과 상담 II"[Pastoral care and counseling in terms of domestic violence II], *Journal of Counseling and the Family*, 113 (2007): 36-42; Byoung Duk Sohn and Jae Seo Lee, "가정폭력에 대한 교회, 사회복지 개입방안 연구"[Research on church social work intervention methods against domestic violence], *Journal of Faith and Learning*, 33 (2007): 35-60; Da Young Song, Mi Jung Kim, and Hee Kyu Choi, *새로쓰는 여성복지론*[Feminist social welfare for women] (Seoul: YangSeoWon, 2011).

prevent domestic violence, protect victims of domestic violence, and provide proper programs and policies for victims and abusers.¹¹² Their 2013 survey of 5000 families (male 49.5%, female 50.5%) found that 45.5% of the total have experienced violence (excluding the form of controlling) in their marital relationships.¹¹³ In the case of women, they have experienced violence in the following forms: controlling (36.5%), emotional violence (28.6%), neglect (17.8%), physical violence (4.9%), and financial violence (3.5%).¹¹⁴ In spite of minor changes in the statistics every three years, the results show that about half of the Korean families who have participated in the studies have experienced marital violence, but have hesitated to reach out for help for several reasons, as presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Reasons for not Seeking Help of Reporting¹¹⁵



¹¹² Republic of Korea, Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (여성가족부), "Prevention of Domestic Violence" http://www.mogef.go.kr/korea/view/policyGuide/policyGuide03_01_01b.jsp?viewfnc1=0&viewfnc2=0&viewfnc3=1&viewfnc4=0&viewfnc5=0&viewfnc6=0 (accessed May 15, 2014). Cited in Da Young Song et al., 312.

¹¹³ Republic of Korea, Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (여성가족부), "2013 가정폭력실태조사"[2013 Report of Domestic Violence], vii. The copy of result was also provided by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family.

¹¹⁴ Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, vii.

¹¹⁵ Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 173.

The main psychological reason indicated by the survey participants for not reaching out for help is shame, which is also the main psychological reason for remaining in conflictive and abusive marital relationships discussed in the literature. Shame has been discussed in terms of its psychological, socio-cultural, and religious dimensions, especially in relation to discrimination and gender-biased roles in the patriarchal systems of the Korean family, church, and society.

First, Korean women feel personal shame when their situations are exposed to others because not having a good marriage itself makes them feel ashamed as a person in a Korean society that values the establishment and maintenance of the family.¹¹⁶ Since a woman's reputation has been determined in Korean society by her ability to look after her husband and children, a woman who has a hard time managing a good marriage anticipates criticism for not being a good enough wife and mother.¹¹⁷

Second, Korean women remain in abusive situations to prevent shame or dishonor not only to themselves personally but also to their parents and families, especially their children. According to Seung Ai Yang, in Korean society women repudiated by their husbands and divorced women became a shame not only for themselves, but also for their parents and families.¹¹⁸ Based on Confucian teachings, married women are called *chulgawein* (출가외인, 出嫁外人), meaning that "once married, the daughter is an outsider."¹¹⁹ Therefore, returning home for any reason has been not acceptable and considered as a shame or dishonor and disgrace to their families. Because of this shame

¹¹⁶ Da Young Song et al., 304-306; Byoung Duk Sohn and Jae Seo Lee, 37.

¹¹⁷ Choi Hee An, *Korean Women and God: Experiencing God in a Multi-Religious Colonial Context* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 38.

¹¹⁸ Yang, 263.

¹¹⁹ Yang, 263.

and dishonor, the parents often hesitate to accept their daughters back into their houses and criticize their daughters for not working hard enough to make their marital relationships better.¹²⁰ Even though this traditional view has been undergoing major change in recent years, this view is still influential.¹²¹ In addition, Korean women are also aware that divorce would bring shame or dishonor to their children and give them bad reputations as children of divorced parents. Children with divorced parents often experience discrimination and criticism based on the assumption that children with divorced parents or single parent may not receive good care and cause problems due to unsolved issues from their divorced parents.

Third, Korean women avoid leaving their circumstances because of the discrimination against divorced women in Korean society. They would experience discrimination not only from strangers in general, but also from people whom they have known, such as neighbors and friends. For example, since family stability, permanency, and relationships are more valued than individual happiness and self-realization in Korean society, women who leave their families for the sake of themselves are considered selfish.¹²² In addition, there is a stigma mainly attached to divorced women and remarried women. Remarried women are considered shameful and carry many negative images, such as “*ge-mo*,” meaning a stepmother who tortures children of new husband.¹²³ Divorced women experience stronger level of discrimination and difficulties,

¹²⁰ Yang, 263.

¹²¹ Su Jin Shin, “한국의 사회변동과 가족주의 전통”[Social change and family tradition in Korea], *Journal of Family Relationships* 4 (1999): 165-92; Wook Song, “여성의 이혼 후 적응과정에 관한 근거 이론적 접근”[A Grounded theory approach of the adjustment process of women after divorce] (Ph.D. diss., Seoul Women’s University, 2012), 8, 12.

¹²² Won Seok Sim, “An Effective Model of Church Ministry for Divorced Young Adults in Korea,” (D.Min. project, Claremont School of Theology, 2003), 20.

¹²³ Yang, 261-62.

especially psychologically and financially, than divorced men.¹²⁴

Christian women experience a similar or stronger level of discrimination against divorced women than non-Christian women in a Korean society. Korean Christians have assumed that divorce is prohibited based on the messages and teachings from their ministers prohibiting divorce.¹²⁵ For this reason, Korean Christian women feel guilt also religiously, feel like they would be sinners when they contemplate divorce, and feel they would no longer fit into their religious group, which believes divorce is not allowable. As a result, Korean Christian women would decide to remain in the midst of suffering in order not to experience shame and discrimination and also not to be alienated from their faith communities.

According to Ai Ra Kim, in Korean society, “maintaining the marriage was a matter of survival for a woman” and, according to Seung Ai Yang, it has been much better for Korean women to endure and wait until their husbands change so that women could recover their honor and dignity as “a steadfast wives who had endured hardship” instead of being disgraced and experiencing multiple layers of shame and discrimination as divorced women, single women, or remarried women.¹²⁶ In reflecting psychologically on the Korean socio-cultural context, Korean women’s reasons for remaining in conflictive and abusive relationships are related to multiple layers of shame and discrimination against divorced women. In applying their arguments, for some Korean women, the shame of divorce and anticipated discrimination against divorced women are

¹²⁴ Wook Song, 8. 12-18.

¹²⁵ Yang, 254.

¹²⁶ Ai Ra Kim, *Women Struggling for a New Life: The Role of Religion in the Cultural Passage from Korea to America* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 6; Yang, 263. The Korean proverb, “Blind for three years, deaf for three years, mute for three years” has been used to advise Korean women in order to emphasize their role not to make any trouble and to maintain their marriage.

considered worse than the suffering and pain of marital conflicts and domestic violence.

Beside shame, other characteristics of Korean women, such as low self-esteem and dependency, related to domestic violence have been also discussed in the Korean literature, but most of those studies are based on English-language literature.¹²⁷ Korean literature pays attention to the Korean society and culture in order to understand Korean women's roles and lives in dealing with marital affliction and also their reasons for not reaching out help. Therefore, it is necessary to reflect on the Korean patriarchal tradition, based on the Confucian teachings, which undergirds Korean minds and lifestyles in order to understand Korean women, including research participants, and their reasons for staying in conflictive and abusive marital relationships.¹²⁸ In addition, it is necessary to investigate the support system and resources that are available for Korean women in their contexts, how the support system and resources are used, and what kinds of policies are developed for women who experience domestic violence.

While psychological, socio-cultural, and multi-dimensional religious reasons for staying reflect many negative elements of Korean women's helplessness and result in considering Korean women as passively remaining in their situations, some Korean Christian female scholars, such as Jung Ha Kim and Wonhee Anne Joh, argue that Korean Christian women are not solely passive in dealing with their suffering. Rather, "they are social agents actively engaged in their own history making," with their own

¹²⁷ Min Soo Park, [Pastoral care and counseling in terms of domestic violence II]: 37; Insook Kim et al., 288-89; Hyun Jim Kim, "유교적인 한국가족 구조 속에서 동반의존성의 이해와 목회 상담적 치유방안: 동반의존성을 중심으로"[The Understanding of codependency in Confucian family structures within Korea and pastoral counseling implications], *Korean Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* 9 (2007): 32-79.

¹²⁸ Da Young Song et al., 303-06; Pastoral Counseling Center, *한국문화와 목회상담*[Korean culture and pastoral counseling] (Seoul: Pastoral Counseling Press, 2003); Jae Hee Han, 한국문화와 다문화 목회상담[Korean culture and multicultural approach in pastoral counseling], *Korean Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* 5(2004): 11-42.

hopes.¹²⁹ These hopes would include hopes for themselves, their husbands, their children, and/or a better life in the future, hopes that could be considered unrealistic, unreasonable, and paradoxical. According to Jung Ha Kim, this hope could not be understood using dualistic “either/or” concepts.¹³⁰ Kim points out that some scholars, whether Korean or not, fail to recognize that “status inconsistency experienced by racial-ethnic women is not something to be balanced or corrected by achieving equilibration or crystallization of their stable statuses; rather, it is a way of life.”¹³¹ Based on Kim’s argument, one cannot understand Korean women’s reasons for staying in conflictive or abusive marriages if one perceives status inequalities and role conflicts as merely negative or as power struggles, or if one considers human relationships and conflicts as only to be balanced or corrected.¹³²

In her interviews with Korean women, Kim also found that in dealing with their oppressive situations Korean women paid little attention to the “women’s freedom and liberation” conversation found in Western feminism and liberation theology.¹³³ According to Kim, this is partly because they found little reason to give up their traditional roles, especially without alternative avenues for achieving a better status and power. Korean Christian women have learned to hold on to the status and power that lies

¹²⁹ Jung Ha Kim, “The Labor of Compassion: Voices of Churched Korean American Women,” in *New Spiritual Homes: Religion and Asian Americans*, ed. David K. Yoo, 202-17 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 210.

¹³⁰ Jung Ha Kim, *Bridge-Maker and Cross-Bearers: Korean-American Women and the Church* (Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1997), 128-129.

¹³¹ Jung Ha Kim, *Bridge-Maker and Cross-Bearers*, 129.

¹³² Jung Ha Kim, *Bridge-Maker and Cross-Bearers*, 128.

¹³³ Jung Ha Kim, “Labor of Compassion,” 212. Jung Ha Kim’s work in interviewing Korean American women in her church was originally to substantiate the claim that the Korean American church is a deeply gendered and racially and ethnically identified institution whose material and ideological arrangements reinforce and sometimes challenge churched Korean American women’s construction of realities. However, her research results reveal that Christianity is both oppressive and liberatory at the same time.

in playing the traditionally-expected gender roles and experience some rewards in their current and later lives.¹³⁴ Kim also recognizes that Korean women consider themselves as active agents in dealing with their daily struggles by using “micromanipulative survival skills” and transmitting “hidden transcripts” from woman to woman.¹³⁵ The term “micromanipulation,” invented by Jean Lipman-Blumen, describes “the utilization of intelligence, canniness, intuition, interpersonal skills, charm, sexuality, deception, and avoidance in order to offset the control of those more powerful.”¹³⁶ Kim uses this term to understand Korean women’s survival skills in dealing with their struggles.¹³⁷ Korean women have learned to use the resources they have to survive, resist, and empower themselves by “utilizing informal means of influence,” and their “articulated wisdom for survival,” which is based on various means, verbal and nonverbal, of communication.¹³⁸ Their verbal and nonverbal forms of “critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant” are called by James C. Scott “hidden transcripts.”¹³⁹ In interviewing Korean women in her church, Kim finds that Korean Christian women in her church take special pride in telling how they have developed various strategies that can be seen as “micromanipulation” and “hidden transcripts.”

Another important aspect discussed in understanding Korean women is compassion that underlies Korean Christian women’s strategies or minds in dealing with their oppressive situation.¹⁴⁰ Numerous Asian theologians use this term, compassion, to

¹³⁴ Jung Ha Kim, “Labor of Compassion,” 212.

¹³⁵ Jung Ha Kim, “Labor of Compassion,” 210.

¹³⁶ Jean Lipman-Blumen, *Gender Roles and Power* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984). Cited in Jung Ha Kim, “Labor of Compassion,” 209.

¹³⁷ Jung Ha Kim, “The Labor of Compassion,” 209.

¹³⁸ Jung Ha Kim, “The Labor of Compassion,” 209-10.

¹³⁹ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 164. Cited in Jung Ha Kim, “The Labor of Compassion,” 210.

¹⁴⁰ Jung Ha Kim, “The Labor of Compassion,” 210.

understand Asian women and their spirituality.¹⁴¹ Compassion has been a significant aspect in understanding Korean women's hopes and spirituality. Hyun Kyung Chung, a Korean feminist theologian, and Andrew Sung Park, a Korean *minjung* theologian use the Korean concept *han* as a starting point for understanding Korean women's suffering and in articulating the compassionate spirituality of Korean women in dealing with their *han*. *Han*, according to Suh Nam Dong, is "the suppressed, amassed and condensed experience of oppression caused by mischief or misfortune so that it forms a kind of lump in one's spirit."¹⁴² For Hyun Youn-Hak, *han* is "a sense of unresolved resentment against injustice suffered, a sense of helplessness because of the overwhelming odds against us, a feeling of total abandonment, a feeling of acute pain of sorrow in one's guts and bowels making the whole body wiggle, and an obstinate urge to take revenge and to right the wrong all these constitute."¹⁴³ While the concept of *han* for all Koreans can be understood in the history of Korea which included foreign invasion, wars, colonization and military repression, for Korean women, *han* can be understood also in relation to sexism in the patriarchal society and culture of Korea. Korean women have been considered to be the ones experiencing the worst suffering, "the *han* of the *hans*," a common saying in Korea.

Chung and Park suggest two ways of dealing with *han*, accepting it or refusing it. In many cases, Korean women have been in the position of accepting *han* and *han*-causing factors. According to Chung, Korean women's spirituality is relationship-

¹⁴¹ As examples, Marianne Katoppo, *Compassionate and Free: An Asian Woman's Theology* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1979); Virginia Fabella and Mercy Amba Oduyoye, eds. *With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986).

¹⁴² Hyun Kyung Chung, "'Han-pu-ri': Doing Theology from Korean Women's Perspective," in *We Dare to Dream: Doing Theology as Asian Women*, ed. Virginia Fabella M.M. and Sun Ai Lee Park (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis books, 1990), 138.

¹⁴³ Chung, "Han-pu-ri," 138.

oriented and “community-oriented,” rather than individualistic; thus, self cannot be understood without others.¹⁴⁴ Since Korean women feel for others, their spirituality is called “compassionate spirituality.”¹⁴⁵ W. Anne Joh also points out that for Korean women the recognition of the self is done in relation to the other, which she calls “collaborative compassion.”¹⁴⁶ This collaborative compassion is not “to maintain the status quo or to perpetuate oppression,” but “to work toward emancipatory praxis for all.”¹⁴⁷ Joh reconstructs Korean women’s compassionate spirituality based on the Korean concept of *Jeong*, unfolding the Chinese character whose meaning is “derived mainly from the notions of heart, clarity, and vulnerability.”¹⁴⁸ Joh states,

Jeong connotes agape, eros, and filial love with the compassion, empathy, solidarity, and understanding that emerges between connected hearts. While acknowledging that oppression engenders polarizations, the way of *jeong* entails radical inclusivity and mutuality in the work toward emancipation, for *jeong* contests relationships and realities that uphold dichotomous views. *Jeong* is the power of eros that forges its presence in the interval between the Self and the Other. It thus blurs the sharply constructed boundary between the Self and the Other while allowing one to move beyond the edges of the Self into the Other and vice versa. *Jeong* is a supplement that comes into the interstitial site of relationality.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ Hyun Kyung Chung, *Struggle to be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women's Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 93.

¹⁴⁵ Chung, *Struggle to be the Sun again*, 89.

¹⁴⁶ W. Anne Joh, “The Transgressive Power of *Jeong*,” in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*, ed. Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004), 155.

¹⁴⁷ Joh, “The Transgressive Power of *Jeong*,” 155.

¹⁴⁸ Joh, “The Transgressive Power of *Jeong*,” 156. The attention to the concept of *Jeong* has been increased among Korean and Korean American theologians. As examples, Kyoo Hoon Oh, 정과 한국교회[Chong and the Korean Church] (Seoul: Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary Press), 2011; Kyoo Hoon Oh, “한국인의 정에 대한 고찰과 목회상담학적 함축성”[Reflections on Korean sentiment of Chong and its implications for pastoral care and counseling], *Korean Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* 5 (2004): 99-125; Seung Hae Yoo-Hess, “*Jeung* and a Korean Pastoral Counseling,” *Korean Journal of Pastoral Counseling* 14 (2010): 137-46.

¹⁴⁹ Joh, “The Transgressive Power of *Jeong*,” 152-153.

For Joh, insisting on rejecting and refusing endurance and practicing separation from *han*-causing factors has their basis in “modern dichotomies of self/other, oppressor/oppressed, and male/female,” and, in addition, this attitude has a tendency to criticize other types of transformation as passive and weak methods of dealing with abusive situations.¹⁵⁰ Joh states that Korean women’s life in the fullness of *jeong* brings “a break in the cycle of *han*” and “opening spaces of potent transformative possibilities in the interstitial space of hybrid realities.”¹⁵¹ While Chung and Kim use the concept *han* in understanding of Korean women’s suffering, Wonhee Anne Joh uses the concept *jeong* in understanding how Korean women resolve *han* through practice of *jeong* or cope with *han*. Based on Joh’s argument, Korean women’s practice of *jeong* in the midst of their suffering is an active acceptance and a conscious decision for coping with *han* in relationships with others and even oppressors. This understanding advocates for reflection on the perspective that considers Korean women remaining in abusive relationships as merely passive. Instead, it draws attention to the possibility of that Korean women’s remaining in abusive relationships is based on compassionate spirituality and could be an active acceptance and a conscious decision for coping with *han* in relationships with their abusive husbands. In addition, this view support the hypothesis of this dissertation that some Korean women decide to remain in conflictive and abusive marital relationships from a position of strength and can be seen as subject or agent in dealing with their marital conflicts rather than victim, subaltern, or survivors.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Joh, 152.

¹⁵¹ Joh, 154.

¹⁵² Discussion about women as survivors in Gondolf and Fisher, 91-104. Cited in Insook Kim et al., 287. See also the discussion about women as subaltern in Gayatri Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” in *Can the Subaltern Speak?: Reflections on the History of an Idea*, ed. Rosalind C. Morris (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 21-80.

CHAPTER 3

THE DESCRIPTIVE-EMPIRICAL TASK

As the first task of practical theological work according to Osmer's model, this chapter presents the descriptive-empirical task within the qualitative research method of phenomenology. The objective of this phenomenological qualitative research, which is the empirical portion of this dissertation, is to increase understanding of some Korean Protestant women's various and complex reasons for remaining in marital conflicts and/or domestic violence situations by reflecting on psychological, socio-economic, socio-cultural, and religious/spiritual dimensions. Therefore, in this chapter I explain the empirical qualitative research method used in this dissertation and present the data from my interviews with seven Korean women. The various reasons for remaining in relationships shared by research participants are categorized into six themes: (1) Marriage and Divorce in Korean Society: Advice, Values, and Reputations; (2) Changes in Themselves and Their Husbands; (3) Compassion for Their Husbands (*ansreoum* and *bulsangham*); (4) Responsibility and Duty; (5) Economics of Divorce and Concern for Children; and (6) Religion, Beliefs, and Rituals. These themes have been categorized based on the elements discussed in the literature review in order to ascertain how research participants' experiences could be viewed through the lenses of the existing literature and prevailing understandings. These themes will be reinterpreted using the interdisciplinary approach and reorganized into different themes in the following chapters.

The Qualitative Research Method

One of the distinctive aspects of practical theology is its emphasis on both human experiences and human situations as research starting points in the use of the practice-

theory-practice approach, a sequential, circular model. John Swinton and Harriet Mowat indicate that a common theme in practical theology is that it begins from human experience and has a “desire to reflect theologically on that experience.”¹ In other words, practical theology needs to be “critical, theological reflection” on human experiences and situations in order to challenge existing theories and practices connected with particular contexts and to ensure and enable faithful practices not only in the Church, but also in the world.² Osmer likewise affirms that practical theological work starts from human experiences and situations by asking, “What is going on?” in his model of the four core tasks of practical theological interpretation: (1) the descriptive-empirical task: what is going on?; (2) the interpretive task: why is this going on?; (3) the normative task: what ought to be going on?; and (4) the pragmatic task: how might we respond?³ According to Gijsbert Dingemans, practical theology, as “a science of action” or “a social science,” has three different approaches: *empirical-analytical*, *hermeneutical*, and *critical-political*.⁴ This dissertation, which is based on Osmer’s model, could be understood as using an integrative model or interdisciplinary model in that an empirical method of phenomenological qualitative research is used for the descriptive-empirical task; hermeneutical interpretation based on interdisciplinary practical theological reflection is done for the interpretive task and the normative task; and critical-political suggestions are made for the pragmatic task.

For some scholars, *method* and *methodology* are two different things and are defined differently. For example, Swinton and Mowat make the distinction that methods

¹ Swinton and Mowat, v.

² Swinton and Mowat, 7.

³ Osmer, 4

⁴ Dingemans, 87.

are “specific techniques that are used for data collection and analysis,” such as interviews, sampling procedures, coding, and so on, and methodology is related to the study of methods and implies “an overall approach to a particular field.”⁵ According to Swinton and Mowat, “methods are carried out within a particular set of methodological assumptions.”⁶ Therefore, what some scholars understand as methods are included in the methodological discussion. This dissertation uses an interdisciplinary methodology that has its emphasis on “the interaction, i.e. reciprocity, between theology and the social sciences.”⁷ While multidisciplinary maintains a sequential relationship between theology and the social sciences, interdisciplinarity creates “a cooperative relationship between the two disciplines.”⁸ An interdisciplinary approach used in doing the interpretive task for practical theological reflection will be discussed in Chapter 4.

As a first task of practical theological work, this chapter, the descriptive-empirical task, has its purpose in “gathering information that helps us discern patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations, or contexts,” and the phenomenological research method is used to gather information of women’s experiences and situations in conflictive and abusive marital relationships.⁹ Phenomenology as “a philosophy of experience” tries to not only understand individuals’ “lived experiences (the thing in itself) of and within the world as the foundation of meaning,” but also have “a deeper understanding of the nature of meaning of [women’s] everyday experiences.”¹⁰ Since I

⁵ Swinton and Mowat, 75-76.

⁶ Swinton and Mowat, 75.

⁷ Johannes A. Van der Ven, *Practical Theology: An Empirical Approach* (Kampen, Netherlands: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1993), 97. Johannes van der Ven articulates four different forms of “epistemologically structured” methodologies used in the history of practical theology: monodisciplinarity, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinarity, and intradisciplinarity.

⁸ Van der Ven, 97.

⁹ Osmer, 4.

¹⁰ Swinton and Mowat, 106.

notice a phenomenon that some Korean women remain in their conflictive and abusive marital relationships in spite of their suffering, I use the phenomenological research method with an intention to explore meanings of this phenomenon.¹¹ One of the main contributions of qualitative research methods is that they “provide as rich and thick a description of the situation in hand as possible”; thus, a phenomenological research method is used to have “a rich description” of Korean women’s lived experiences by listening to their stories and reasons for staying in their marriages and enduring their marital struggles and developing “a composite description of the essence of the experience for all of [these women].”¹²

In particular, I use a hermeneutic, interpretive phenomenology approach rather than empirical, transcendental, descriptive phenomenology approach. While descriptive phenomenology, as originated by Edmund Husserl, tries to bracket “all past knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation,” hermeneutic phenomenology rejects “the possibility of such objectivity or neutrality” and emphasizes the researchers’ awareness of their own pre-understandings or prejudice.¹³ Within a hermeneutic, interpretive phenomenology approach, I do not pretend to have “objectivity or neutrality,” but rather strive to be aware of my own “pre-understandings as prejudices” and “historical situatedness,” which is necessary for developing and interpreting a phenomenon, along

¹¹ Swinton and Mowat, 108.

¹² Swinton and Mowat, 46, 109; Max Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 177.

¹³ Carla Willig, *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology: Adventures in Theory and Method* (Maidenhead, England: Open University Press, 2008), 55-56; Swinton and Mowat, 109-14; Friesen et al., 2, 21-23. Also see the section, “A History of Phenomenological Method,” in Hee-Kyu Heidi Park’s dissertation, “Lamp to My Feet, Light to My Path: Understanding Biblical Engagement for Transformation” (Ph.D. diss., Claremont School of Theology, 2014), 51-56, and the section, “Qualitative Empirical Research Method: Hermeneutic Phenomenological Method,” in Inhyo Cho’s dissertation, “Interdisciplinary Study on Korean Kirogi Mothers’ Adjustment: A Practical Theological Framework for Pastoral Care and Counseling” (Ph. D. diss., Claremont School of Theology, 2013), 68-71.

with continuous reflection.¹⁴ Even though I use hermeneutic, interpretive phenomenology, it does not mean that this method is not descriptive. According to Swinton and Mowat, hermeneutic phenomenology presents “both descriptive and interpretive elements” in it.¹⁵

[it is] descriptive (phenomenological)... because it wants to be attentive to how things appear, it wants to let things speak for themselves; it is... interpretive (hermeneutic)... because it claims that there are no such things as uninterpreted phenomena. This implied contradiction may be resolved if one acknowledges that the (phenomenological) ‘facts’ of lived experiences are always already meaningfully (hermeneutically) experienced. Moreover, even the ‘facts’ of lived experience need to be captured in language (the human science text), and this is inevitably an interpretive process.¹⁶

Even though descriptions and comprehensions in this chapter along with other chapters of the research could be seen as descriptive, these are more likely based on my hermeneutical interpretation with my own perspective and situatedness.

The Recruitment of Research Participants

For this research, I intended to have in-depth interviews with six to nine Korean Protestant women who to some degree have settled into their marriage and religious community. Before the recruitment of research participants, I submitted a research plan to the Claremont School of Theology Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval and completed computer-based training program on the Protection of Human Participants in Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI).¹⁷ Then, I looked for Korean Protestant female volunteers married more than five years, a Christian more than five

¹⁴ Swinton and Mowat, 111, 113.

¹⁵ Swinton and Mowat, 109.

¹⁶ Van Manen, 181. Cited in Swinton and Mowat, 109-10.

¹⁷ I participated in CITI program at Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative at the University of Miami in order to fulfill the IRB requirement. For information of online training, see <https://www.citiprogram.org> (accessed May 10, 2014).

years, and who have experienced conflictive and abusive marital relationships. I define conflictive and abusive marital relationships as marital relationships that involve a variety of types and intensities of marital conflicts, including various forms of domestic violence. I use the phrase “conflictive and abusive marital relationships” because: (1) marital conflicts are often thought to be different from domestic violence even though studies on domestic violence have been developed based on work on a variety of family conflict issues; (2) understandings of marital conflict or violence vary based on individuals and their different understandings of violence’s visibility, intensity, and frequency, and; (3) the term domestic violence may cause individuals’ hesitation, hostility, or preoccupation. When recruiting the interviewees, I didn’t define “conflictive and abusive marital relationships,” but instead let the women themselves decide whether their relationships met this criteria. But, I explained the term briefly when the interviewees asked about the term during recruiting or interviews.

These volunteers were recruited in various ways. First, I directly asked for volunteers whenever I had a guest speaking engagement in churches and organizations in Protestant contexts. Second, I also used the “gatekeepers” of other communities and organizations where potential volunteers belong and might be contacted. These gatekeepers included pastors, ministers, counselors, and shelter workers who could introduce my research to their members and clients so that volunteers could contact me. I explained the purpose of the interview and study to the gatekeepers and asked them to announce and explain the purpose of the interview in order to recruit any potential volunteers. Given the vulnerability of the circumstances of the potential volunteers, the gatekeepers were asked to use **Permission to Release or Obtain Personal Information**

Form (see Appendix C) to make the referral to me in order to protect volunteers and their information. But, in all cases, volunteers contacted me by text message or phone call. Participation was completely voluntary and participants were free to withdraw from the study without penalty. No compensation was offered.

Interview Procedures

Within this approach, I interviewed eight Korean women from different locations and congregations. For the purposes of this dissertation, I am using data from seven of the interviews. I present six Korean Protestant women and a Korean atheist woman; I have excluded a Korean Protestant woman who is not qualified since she denied any experiences of abuse in spite of her recent marital conflicts and struggles. Interviews were conducted in mutually agreed upon spaces: a reserved room at the counseling setting; a private office near to volunteers' homes; in two cases, in participants' houses. Each participant was interviewed one time for 2-3 hours or two times for 1-2 hours, in order to give sufficient time and, when possible, multiple occasions for conversation and clarification. Two participants were met one time due to distance, and two participants were met one time due to their work, each for about four hours. All interviews for each participant were done within a month's time for continuity of the interview. During the interviews, the researcher and participant had opportunity for clarification, correction, and sharing additional information. All interviews were recorded in an audio format with the participants' permission and were password protected.

In the beginning, the participants were informed about confidentiality, recording, the use of pseudonyms, and the purpose and process of the interview and overall research project. The consent form in Korean (see Appendix A-Korean) was used to document in

writing the volunteers' understanding of the project and of their rights and their agreement to participate. As indicated on the consent form, the participants was informed that, if they wished, they could view the portions of the dissertation draft in which their interview data is presented and, if they wish at that time, change their decisions regarding their participation.¹⁸

The participants were asked to fill out an **Interview Intake Survey** (see Appendix B), which collected information about their age, education, occupation, number and age of any children, medical issues, and denomination. This form was used to examine both possible influences on their reasons for remaining and any differences among them in their understandings of the marital issues, such as teachings regarding marriage and divorce, if these responses emerged from the participants.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted, anticipating use of the following pre-prepared interview questions:

How long have you been married?

결혼하신지 얼마나 되셨습니까?

How did you meet your spouse?

어떻게 배우자를 만나셨나요?

What has it been like for you to be married?

결혼한다는 것, 결혼생활을 유지하는 것은 어떤 의미였나요?

What do you appreciate about your marriage?

결혼생활에 가장 감사할만한 것은 무엇이었나요?

What have been the main concerns and struggles in your marital relationship?

결혼에서 부부관계를 생각할 때 가장 주된 걱정이나 갈등이 무엇이었나요?

When experiencing problems or conflicts, have you thought of getting divorce or separation?

문제나 갈등을 경험할 때, 이혼 혹은 별거에 대해 생각해 보신 적 있으신가요?

When experiencing problems or conflicts, have you experienced any abuse?

문제나 갈등을 경험할 때, 본인이 가정폭력 상황에 노출된 적이 있으신가요?

¹⁸ Frederick J. Wertz, et al., *Five Ways of Doing Qualitative Analysis: Phenomenological Psychology, Grounded Theory, Discourse Analysis, Narrative Research, and Intuitive Inquiry* (New York: Guilford Press, 2011), 356-57.

(I may need to explain the definition of marital abuse or violence or hear their definition.)
When experiencing problems or conflicts, what helps you to cope with situations?
문제나 갈등을 경험할 때, 어떤 것들이 그러한 상황들을 견디어 내고 극복할 수 있도록 도왔나요?
When experiencing problems or conflicts, what makes you continue your marriage?
결혼생활 중 부부간의 문제나 갈등을 경험할 때 마다 결혼 생활을 지켜온, 결혼 생활을 유지할 수
있게 만들었던 것은 무엇인가요?

During the interviews and after the first interview, I kept journals to sort out my thoughts, prepare the next interview, and adjust interview questions as needed. During the interviews, these questions were modified in order to adequately follow the participants' stories, and additional questions were added after listening to and analyzing the participants' stories. For example, I added two more questions in order to figure out their feelings for their spouse and themselves: If you think of your husband, what kinds of feelings come to your mind? If you think of yourself, what kinds of feelings come to your mind? I conducted and transcribed the interviews in Korean. The transcripts were coded, organized, and structured in Korean. Interviews quoted in the dissertation are my translations from Korean into English.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was done in five steps, though the process was, in the words of Taylor-Powell and Renner, "fluid, so moving back and forth between steps." They name the steps as follows: (1) "get to know your data"; (2) "focus the analysis"; (3) "categorize information"; (4) "identify patterns and connections within and between categories"; and (5) "interpretation—bringing it all together."¹⁹ First, I listened/re-listened to the tape recordings, transcribed them into Korean, and read and re-read the transcribed text in order to understand the data. While transcribing the data, memoing and journaling were

¹⁹ Ellen Taylor-Powell and Marcus Renner, "Analyzing Qualitative Data," <http://learningstore.uwex.edu/assets/pdfs/g3658-12.pdf>, 2-5 (accessed May 25, 2014).

used to reflect on any impressions I had. I wrote memos, “short phrases, ideas, or key concepts,” on the transcripts when themes and questions came to my mind.²⁰ I also kept journals not only to reflect on my own feelings, thoughts, and concerns in the interview process, but also to look for similar and different themes found in the research participants’ interviews. Second, I focused my analysis by reviewing the purpose of my research, what I wanted to find out, what questions were asked, and how participants responded.²¹ Third, I tried to “identify themes or patterns—ideas, concepts, behaviors, interactions, incidents, terminology or phrases used.”²² I reflected on the transcripts through line-by-line analysis and/or unit-by-unit analysis as necessary. This thematic analysis was done not only by hand to detect “themes in the data” and select “some for extended focus and elaborate reflection,” but also by using NVivo 10.²³ Then I organized the themes into coherent categories and subcategories. Categorizing information was done by combining both “preset categories,” which started with topics, concepts, or themes from the literature review, and “emergent categories,” which were created while examining the collected data.²⁴ Fourth, I analyzed patterns and connections within and between categories by reflecting on such characteristics as similarities and differences in responses, enumeration of the data, and cause-effect relationships. Finally, interpretation of the data was done by presenting “a list of key points or important findings” that resulted from categorizing and sorting the data.²⁵ The results of my data analysis will be

²⁰ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007), 183.

²¹ Taylor-Powell and Renner, 2.

²² Taylor-Powell and Renner, 2.

²³ Frederick J. Wert et al., 377-78.

²⁴ Taylor-Powell and Renner, 3. Preset categories can be understood as a priori codes, and emergent categories as inductive codes. See <http://www.southalabama.edu/coe/bset/johnson/lectures/lec17.pdf> (accessed May 25, 2014).

²⁵ Taylor-Powell and Renner, 5.

presented in this chapter as well as the following chapters.

Risk and Validation

A potential risk involved in this approach is the relational dimension of the method.²⁶ While the researcher in traditional science is considered to have power, the qualitative researcher is “in favor of sharing power and undertaking a more dialogical and collaborative relationship with research participants.”²⁷ Therefore, the relational risks of this method are related to handling power dynamics, especially in the process of data collection and data analysis/interpretation. As an example, in the patriarchal and hierarchical Korean society, as a religious professional, researcher, and Ph.D. student, I will be accorded social and positional power by most participants that might cause the participants to hesitate to correct me if I misunderstand or misinterpret the participants. For this reason, I explained these aspects of my position and provided opportunities for clarification, correction, and sharing additional information during the interviews. With this method, I do not pretend to have “objectivity or neutrality,” but rather use my own “pre-understandings as prejudices” and “historical situatedness” along with continuous reflection.²⁸ I explicitly addressed these issues during the process of requesting their consent.

In addition, there are also potential risks related to the topic and research questions, as mentioned earlier, because the topic is related to marital conflicts and domestic violence. I was aware and kept in mind that participants may feel stress caused by the interview questions. I was also mindful that my questions could cause various

²⁶ Frederick J. Wert et al., 84-86, 358-64; Creswell, 55-60.

²⁷ Frederick J. Wert et al., 84-85.

²⁸ Swinton and Mowat, 111, 113.

feelings, such as embarrassment, shame, and guilt. In addition, the participants can be considered “vulnerable populations,” in that they have lived in conflictive and abusive marital relationships and participating in this research can place them at risk, such as increased conflict in their marital and social relationships.²⁹ Therefore, I kept in mind the potential for psychological harm or physical risk, allowed the participants to withdraw without penalty at any time, and planned to provide referrals if necessary. In the U.S. context, if participants are in danger of harming themselves or others, and/or if information indicates that children, elders, or other dependent adults might be in danger of neglect or abuse, it is legally mandated to report this to appropriate legal agents. Even though I do not have any legal obligation to report in the Korean context, if necessary, I planned to provide psychological support, referrals, and necessary information, such as one-stop service, including emergency hot line (112, 1366, 117) and shelter information provided by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (여성가족부).

To validate the research, several aspects were considered, based on Lincoln and Guba’s “evaluative criteria”: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.³⁰ I used open-ended questions, audiotaped the interview, transcribed the interview into Korean, and quoted the participants’ responses in English (literally translated, if necessary) in the dissertation. I also continuously and critically reflected on my potential biases and predispositions, which have helped to develop this research and

²⁹ Amos Hatch, *Doing Qualitative Research in Education Settings* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002). Cited in Creswell, 56.

³⁰ Based on Lincoln and Guba’s evaluative criteria, credibility means “confidence in the truth of the findings”; transferability means “showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts”; dependability means “showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated”; and confirmability means “a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest.” “Qualitative Research Guidelines Project,” <http://www.qualres.org/HomeLinc-3684.html> (accessed December 30, 2014).

may have had various effects throughout the research process. In particular, in order to increase credibility and dependability, I discussed my research and related issues with pastors, pastors' wives, lay people, and counselors when recruiting volunteers and whenever I had a chance to meet with these people. I listened to their opinions about how they perceived this phenomenon in the Korean context, and I have kept journals to reflect on my own concerns in the interview process and in terms of the purpose of my research. In order to achieve transferability and confirmability, I engaged in an interdisciplinary approach to reflect on women's experiences by using multiple theories and perspectives that helped to interpret and explain the data, and I tried to describe research participants' experiences and my reflections as much as possible in the dissertation, especially in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. In addition, I provided opportunities for clarification, correction, and sharing of additional information to the participants during the interviews. However, since the interviews were done with only seven Korean women and within limited time frames, that is, one or two meetings, this dissertation cannot be seen as having much credibility, transferability, dependability, or confirmability. In addition, for these same reasons, I do not claim this research reached data saturation.

Unexpected Interviewees and Adjustments in Research

Among the volunteers for in-person interviewees, I found that two of them did not qualify for my research. One woman was not in an abusive relationship, in spite of her recent marital conflicts, and her issues were more related to remarriage, her infertility, and financial struggles. She was in her first marriage, while her husband is in his second marriage. She has also expressed her desire to have counseling with me beginning in November. Therefore, I decided not to include her story in my research with her

agreement; in other words, I will not draw any data from her story. At the end of our initial conversation, I explained to her that she might not be included in my dissertation.

Another woman I met with also turned out not to fit the criteria for my study, since she is not a Christian and has been separated from her husband for about a year due to continuous conflicts related to her husband's infidelity and irresponsibility. Even though she considers herself to be an atheist and is separated, I decide to include her story and draw data from her story because it provides important implications as I compare her stories, spirituality, resilience, and so on with that of the other interviewees. As a result, in this dissertation, I present stories of seven women in conflictive and abusive relationships for this research study.

I also made some adjustments in the data collection and interview processes. When I planned the interviews, I intended to conduct them in a reserved counseling room. However, due to distance and the inaccessibility of counseling rooms, most interviews were conducted in a mutually agreed-upon space—a reserved room at a private office near the volunteers' homes—and two interviews were done at the participant's houses. In addition, in spite of the plan to meet with research participants two or three times for one to two hours each time, distance caused me to meet with two participants only one time for two to three hours each, and work situations led me to interview two participants for four hours in only one session each.

The Stories of the Interviewees

Since the qualitative research method of phenomenology seeks to provide a deeper understanding from participants' perspectives, the results described in this section do not lead to a generalized theory, but instead describe the individuals' own responses

and perspectives categorized into the themes. The stories of seven research participants will be presented by using pseudonyms: six Korean Protestant women and one Korean atheist woman in conflictive and abusive relationships. Three women are in their 40's, two women are in their 50's, and two women are in their 60's. Two women live in Seoul, three women in Gyeonggido Province, one woman in Jollado Province, and one woman in Gyeongsangdo Province. Among the seven, two women are pastors' wives. I do not specify their locations and positions in order to protect their privacy.

Introduction of Interviewees

Sevin is in her 40's, has been married for 24 years, and has one child. She met her husband, who was a senior in her friend's school, in her early 20's, and dated for one and a half years. When she decided to get married, she did not know what it would be like to be married; she just wanted to move away from her mother, who she experienced as a stubborn and self-righteous person. She has struggled with her husband's indecisiveness and the generation gap between them, due to an age difference of 20 years, but mainly she has suffered due to her husband's abusive language, yelling and swearing, and occasional instrumental abuse whenever he becomes drunk. After years of this, she realized that this behavior was his habitual way of releasing stress. Following a stroke in 2006, he reduced the frequency of his drinking binges. She was born a Protestant, but became a born again Christian who has "faith" (*sinang or mideum*) in God four years ago.

Jina is in her 40's, has been married for 17 years, and has two children. She met her husband at school and got married after dating for six months. She and her husband were born Protestants. She indicated her struggles with her husband were mainly due to their different personalities, different ways of thinking, communication styles, and in-law

relationships. When she decided to get married, she hoped to have stability in various ways in her life. However, she has frequently thought of getting a divorce whenever she has experienced her husband's explosive anger, abusive language, and occasional instrumental abuse, especially during the first ten years of her marital life. Since her husband has become older and learned nonviolent communication through a special program, he has tried to change his ways of communicating and of showing his emotions.

Julie is in her 40's, has been married for 23 years, and has a child. She met her husband at school and dated for six years. She was born a Protestant Christian, but became a Christian who has "faith" (*mideum*) and "receive salvation" (*guwonbadeun*) about four years ago. Her conflicts with her husband were based on different family backgrounds and life values; the main conflict came from her husband's controlling behavior that began during the dating period. Her husband always wanted to know where she was or accompany her and did not allow her to talk with other men. She thought that the issues related to control and jealousy could be settled if she got married; however, her husband's control of her activities continued and has led to verbal and physical fighting once in a while. After her husband dramatically apologized for what he had done in terms of limiting her freedom and activities, he has made an effort to change himself and his relationship with her.

Jisu is in her 50's, has been married for 29 years, and has three children. One of her children passed away a year ago due to leukemia. She was born a Protestant Christian, while her husband does not claim any religious affiliation. She met her husband at school and dated for four years. She did not have any specific ideas in terms of marriage and just thinks of marriage as a developmental task or course. Her conflicts

with her husband were based on her husband's irresponsibility, gambling, debt, and "*baram*" (cheating, literally translated). In addition, when fighting, her husband became abusive; for example, he broke a big balcony window twice and threw a cup at her head. She went to an emergency room and had stitches, but nobody asked her whether she experienced domestic violence. She prepared divorce papers twice, but she did not file them because she was not confident she could live by herself. She has lived separate from her husband for three years due to her husband's work. She recently decided to move to her husband's place and live with him because she felt compassion and pity for him in his struggle to make money by himself.

Hanna is in her 50's, has been married for 23 years, has been separated for about a year, and has two children. Hanna does not have a religious affiliation, while her husband's family has been Catholic. She met her husband at school, and her husband begged her to marry him after following her for a year. Her conflicts with her husband were based on different personalities, family backgrounds, in-law relationships, lack of communication, and "*baram*." Her husband has cheated on her three times and sometimes accused her of delusional jealousy. She forgave him twice, but was not able to pardon him the third time and decided to separate from him. Even though she plans to get divorced, she said that she feels pity and compassion for her husband.

Mia is in her 60's, has been married for 44 years, and has two children. She met her husband at work, dated for a year, and married at the age of 26. She began to attend church when she was in her 20's due to her mother and became "enthusiastically" (*yeorsimhi*) going to church when she confronted difficulties in her marital relationship. She has suffered from her husband's explosive anger, instrumental abuse, and "*baram*."

Her marital issues became more serious about 10 years ago, when her husband threatened to divorce her. She called 112 (the equivalent of 911 in the U.S.) on two or three occasions to get help, but did not receive proper help. She was asked by a police officer whether she wants to report on charges of adultery rather than dealing with her husband's threaten; she refused to report her case because she did not want her husband to be booked on charges of adultery.³¹ The police did not charge him for his abusive behaviors. In spite of her opposition, he divorced her, but he still came to her house three or four times a week for three years. He came back for good and they were reunited as a married couple seven years ago.

Nami is in her 60's, has been married for 43 years, and has two children. Her husband passed away nine years ago. Nami's first meeting with her husband was arranged by her sister-in-law, and she got married after that first meeting without having a dating period. Nami decided to marry this public servant because she had grown up in a poor farming family and wanted to marry a man who was not a farmer and was financially stable. Her conflicts with her husband were based on her husband's irresponsibility and illness, gambling, drinking, in-law relationships, and "*baram*." Right after she got married, she lived with her family-in-law and took care of her husband's parents, two sisters, and two brothers, while her husband was in and out of the home. Nami's husband was hospitalized with pulmonary disease and later with cirrhosis of the liver when she was in her 30's. Nami's husband was rehabbed due to cirrhosis when she

³¹ In the Korean context, adultery had been not only a religious but also a legal term, while in some U.S. states, e.g. in California, adultery is no longer a crime. However, on Feb. 26, 2015, adultery became no longer a crime in Korea. In order to indicate extramarital relationships of research participants' husbands, I often used the Korean terms, "*baram*," "*baramnada*," and "*barampiuda*," used by research participants.

was in her 40's. In spite of her efforts to take care of him, he was not grateful to her; rather, he told her that he would do whatever he wanted to do, such as gambling, drinking, and meeting other women. Nami used to be a Buddhist and became a Christian in her late 40's as a result of her chronic suffering and struggles in her marital relationship. Nami's husband passed away due to his disease when she was in her late 50's.

Conflicts, Abuse, and Extramarital Affairs in Their Marriages

The women I interviewed have experienced various conflicts attributable not only to different personalities, lifestyles, beliefs, family backgrounds, in-law relationships, and communication and problem solving styles, but also to issues related to alcohol dependency, drinking habits, gambling, and infidelity. All of them have experienced abuse or violence at some level or another. Some of them were aware that they had experienced domestic violence, while some seem to consider their experiences as just part of or a result of marital conflicts. In this section, I present their experiences of abuse and violence in their marriages. Figure 5, "Identifying Domestic Violence," prepared by Michele Harway and Marsali Hansen, helps one not only understand what can be defined as domestic violence, but also to realize what kinds of abusive situations research participants have experienced in their marital conflicts.

Sevin (in her 40's) presented her experiences of verbal and emotional abuse by her husband when he got drunk. He drank three or four times a week and swore at her or sometimes at their child. For the first few years, she fought with him when it happened, since he cursed at her. Later she realized that it was his way to release stress. She also acknowledged that she could not solve relational problems as a result of fighting. After

that, she became indifferent and distanced herself from her husband, treating him like a stranger for years. Since her husband had a stroke eight years ago, he has stopped drinking:

After he had a stroke, he stopped smoking and drinking. But, now he drinks a little bit. He used to drink a lot. Three or four times a week... When he is not drunk, he is well-behaved, quiet, and gentle; however, when he gets drunk, he yells and swears. I don't know if he does this when he's not at home... In the beginning, I thought that he swore at me ... So, we fought a lot... Later, I realized that it was his habit... Since he used to live alone, he apparently released his stress in that way. I did not know this before we got married...

Figure 5. Identifying Domestic Violence³²

Physical Violence using one's physical strength or presence to control someone	Verbal and Emotional Abuse using one's words or voice to control someone
Pushing or shoving Slapping, grabbing, biting, hitting, spanking, kicking Holding down, twisting arms, banging head on floor, choking, pinning against wall, carrying against her will Forced sex Kneeing, hair pulling, punching Burning, trying to run over with car Throwing objects, punching walls or doors, breaking windshields Breaking or tearing clothes and personal objects Driving recklessly to scare Blocking exits or car, taking keys, taking money or bank cards--all to prevent her from leaving Unplugging the phone	Coercion and threats, including threatening divorce, suicide, reporting her to the authorities, making her do illegal things Intimidation, including making her afraid by using looks, actions, and gestures Stalking or checking up on her, accusations of sexual infidelity Isolation, including controlling her activities and possessions (e.g., access to the phone, interrogations about her activities, preventing her from seeing friends or family, intense jealousy) Economic abuse, including preventing her from working or going to school, controlling the finances Threatening or using the children (e.g., making her feel guilty about the children, threatening to take the children) Invoking male privilege (e.g., treating her like a servant, making all the decisions, defining roles, being master of the castle) Emotional abuse (e.g., putdowns, name calling, denigration, mind games)

³² Michele Harway and Marsali Hansen, *Spouse Abuse: Assessing and Treating Battered Women, BATTERERS, and Their Children* (Sarasota, FL: Professional Resource Press, 1994), 69. This table was "adapted and modified with permission from materials developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, Duluth, Minnesota" by Harway and Hansen.

Jina (in her 40's) indicated that her marital conflicts were based on different communication styles. While her husband likes progressive and professional women who have their own voices, he ironically wants her to be submissive when it comes to following his directions. Because she has not been submissive to him, their communications have turned into fights, and her husband has expressed his anger with a loud voice, yelling, or instrumental abuse. Since her husband has become older and participated in a nonviolent communication program at a church, he has tried to change his methods of communication and of showing his emotions.

My husband and I were not good at communication. My husband tried to control me or have power with a firm, strong attitude and loud voice... I was not able to accept it... I became passive aggressive... [For example,] I did not talk. I was not nice, either. I stonewalled, became stony-faced, and created relational distance from him...

The reason why I seriously thought of divorce was his way of expressing anger ... Yelling, throwing stuff, or kicking something, even though he did not throw stuff at me... These days, he rarely does these things... But, he had done it for about ten years... It did not happen often ... every two or three years ... Whenever it happened, I would think over whether I had to continue in this marriage or not ... It was a kind of violence, in fact. Even though I was not bitten by my husband ... it was verbal abuse... When he was upset, he yelled and cursed... When this happened, I felt insulted... I thought that I couldn't live with a person like him... When it repeated, I thought that he is a person who might do these things anytime and considered divorce.

Julie (in her 40's) presented her experiences of verbal and emotional abuse by her husband, who controlled her activities and got angry at her when she talked to other men. According to Julie, her suffering accumulated during the six years they dated and the first years of their marriage; as a result, she felt timid and nervous when she went out and socialized. When her husband became sulky, he did not talk to her and became stony-faced. When they fought, she sometimes became aggressive and violent, and he sometimes became violent and slapped her, but mostly he became calm and held her to

stop her abusive behaviors. After living separated for a year due to her husband's work, her husband apologized for what he had done to her and has tried to change his attitude toward her.

It was not love, but obsession... I always had to be with him, and he always had to know where I was. He did not like to see me with any men... When it happened, he wanted to be with me, without saying anything and with a cold manner.... Because it was so painful, I often apologized, even though I didn't want to... I was a woman who always did something wrong... I always became timid and nervous when men showed up... How could I live like that? ... It was so painful... Sometimes we aggressively fought each other, even when we were dating... Basically, I'm calm, but I became angry... I was not able to refrain from it... If I suppressed it, we did not end up fighting. But, if I responded, we began to fight. Hitting each other... After we got married, we became more tensed, rather than fighting, but I occasionally threw stuff to show my anger... But, seeing him calm made me more upset because he seemed not to care for my feelings.

Jisu (in her 50's) pointed out that her conflicts with her husband were based on her husband's irresponsibility, gambling, debt, and extramarital affair. She presents her experiences of verbal, emotional, and instrumental abuse when fighting, such as her husband breaking a balcony window twice and throwing a cup that hit her in the head.

If fighting, fighting couldn't continue. He broke things. Throwing... He broke a balcony window twice... One day, when my son was a middle-school student, he decided to stop smoking. Then he felt crabby and became bad-tempered, so, my son got upset and talked back to him. Then, he threw a cup, and I got hit in the head by it. I got stitches at an emergency room.

Jisu also indicated her emotional suffering due to her husband's extramarital affair, which was the main reason she thought of getting a divorce. She prepared divorce papers but did not submit them because she was not confident that she could live by herself at that time and overcome the social discrimination that exists against divorced women. She understood the reason for his extramarital affair as a lack of care and love from his parents.

He had a stepfather and did not receive care and love from his mom... It is not like he does not like me... He is a bit sick in that manner, such as having a sex addiction and a drug addiction. He seems to do it in order to fill his empty heart... It is a kind of psychological flaw.

Hanna (in her 50's and atheist) indicated that her conflicts with her husband were based on different personalities, family backgrounds, in-law relationships, lack of communication, and extramarital affairs. Her main reason for separating from her husband was his extramarital affair, which was repeated three times: the first incident happened after ten years of marriage, the second incident happened five years later, and the third incident happened a year ago. When she found out about it the first time, she indicated that there was a big fight with emotional, verbal, and instrumental abuse. Her husband's irresponsible, indifferent, and silent attitude in dealing with marital conflicts and "*baram*" has been likely to upset her and end up in fighting. When she found out about his extramarital affair for the third time a year ago, she felt deeply betrayed by her husband and decided to live separately from him.

He is very conspiratorial... He does not talk. He does not open himself up. Then, he does something to break trust... I heard from friends that my husband traveled with another woman... He often spends time taking care of other women who struggle in their lives and feel depressed. But, he was hiding, and he got caught... I wasn't able to understand him. He did not solve family problems, but traveled with women... He never admitted that he cheated with her, but said that he just traveled with her... He never accepted that he had a problem... He also considered me a crazy person ... having delusional jealousy of him... When it happened for the first time, I was so upset and broke stuff and moved out of our home... After a month, I came back home because he apologized.

Mia (in her 60's) presents that she has suffered from her husband's explosive anger, instrumental violence, and extramarital affair. His abuse and violence escalated when he had an affair with another woman.

For no reason, he got angry and lost his temper. Sometimes he overturned the dining table, saying the food had no taste ... Just got angry. Sometimes he said

that he would kill me ... Oh my! I couldn't do anything when it happened... Later, I thought that he was sick ... like he had a personality disorder ... He is a person who cannot handle his temper ... it was better when I thought that he was like a person having psychological problems ...

He not only got angry, but also overturned a dining table and broke stuff ... When he was out of his mind in cheating on me, he yelled at me and threatened he would get a divorce ... Sometimes he said he will kill me ... I reported him two or three times [crying], my son was there, shaking ... When I fought him, I called to my son, and my son also fought with his father ... I don't want to talk about it. I don't want to be reminded of it ... Then, the police said that he had to be booked on a charge of adultery, since it is related to adultery ... I couldn't allow it ... It has been years that he has continued to have an affair.

Nami (in her 60's) indicated that her conflicts with her husband were based on her roles and relationships with her family-in-law, her husband's irresponsibility, illness, gambling, drinking, and extramarital affair. Right after she got married, she lived with her family-in-law and took care of her father-in-law who had a stroke in his later life, her mother-in-law with cancer, and raised her brothers- and sisters-in-law until their marriages. She hesitated to discuss how seriously she had fought with her husband and often sighed heavily when talking about marital issues. She expressed that she sometimes became aggressive and explosive when fighting and indicated her experiences of emotional, verbal, and financial neglect, abuse, and suffering in confronting her husband's extramarital affair.

I spared his life, but he had not treated me in a good manner. [Deep sigh.] He had cheated on me (*baramnada*)... It was about in my late 40's. He had continuously cheated on me (*barampida*) even before that time for about five or six years. After he recovered from his disease, he began to do that. He did what he wanted to do. He did not care about me. As a result, we fought a lot. After we got married, I took care of his parents and raised his two sisters and two brothers until they got married. After I had done these things, I thought I could live my own life, but he began to live his own life. I felt like I had lost my energy to live.

Sevin, Jina, Julie, Jisu, Mia, and Nami shared their experiences of verbal, emotional, and instrumental abuse at some level or another, such as threats, intimidation, checking up on

them, and controlling them, and of physical violence, such as pushing, slapping, grabbing, hitting, holding down, twisting arms, and throwing or breaking objects. In the cases of Julie and Hanna, they indicated that they became abusive and violent when fighting with their husbands. In addition, Jisu, Hanna, Mia, and Nami noted that extramarital affair was a significant factor in causing not only marital conflicts and fights, but also verbal, emotional, and physical abuse and violence. They also thought of separation or divorce as being a consequence of extramarital affairs. Even though extramarital affairs or *baram* is not categorized as abuse in Figure 5, this issue has strong connections to marital conflicts, abuse, and violence.

The experiences of abuse and violence described in Figure 5 and presented by research participants are strongly related to a variety of marital conflict issues, whether the participants' experiences were extreme or not. In other words, while the term *domestic violence* is often thought to be about brutal physical violence and life-threatening situations, it can exist in various forms, including verbal, emotional, physical, and instrumental abuse, which were all presented by my research participants. In addition, except for brutal ongoing violence, it is sometimes hard for individuals and couples to make a clear distinction as to whether they are simply experiencing marital conflicts or whether it is domestic violence. Some of the research participants were aware that they had experienced domestic violence, while some considered their experiences as just a part of or result of marital conflicts. These women thought of the violence as an occasional occurrence, rather than as abuse or chronic violence, since their experiences of abuse and violence did not have enough visibility, intensity, and frequency to consider their experiences to be abuse.

Their Reasons for Living with their Situations

In the literature review, I discussed several reasons, based on English-language literature, why women stay or live in abusive and conflictive relationships: (1) low self-esteem; (2) feelings of fear, shame, and guilt; (3) love or a “traumatic bond”; (4) finances; and (5) children. In addition, Korean women’s reasons for staying were considered, based on a combination of Korean- and English-language literature by Korean and Korean-American scholars. Additional factors included (1) shame on an individual and familial level; (2) discrimination against divorced women in Korean society; and (3) Korean women’s roles and status in patriarchal Korean society and culture. Mindful of the literature review, in the following sections I present all the reasons mentioned by research participants and categorize them according to several themes: (1) Marriage and Divorce in Korean Society: Advice, Values, and Reputations; (2) Changes in Themselves and Their Husbands; (3) Compassion for Their Husbands (*ansreoum* and *bulsangham*); (4) Responsibility and Duty; (5) Economics of Divorce and Concern for Children; and (6) Religion, Beliefs, and Rituals. These themes are organized based on the categories discussed in the literature review in order to see how research participants’ experiences could be viewed based on the existing literature and prevailing understandings. Since these themes will be reinterpreted by using the interdisciplinary approach and reorganized into different themes in the following chapters, more themes will be presented in the following chapters.

Marriage and Divorce in Korean Society: Advice, Values, and Reputations

For all the research participants, their own perspectives, along with others’ perspectives, on marriage and divorce have played significant roles not only in dealing

with marital conflicts, abuse, and violence, but also in their decision-making processes related to separation or divorce. In dealing with her marital conflicts, Sevin (in her 40's) was not able to talk about her difficulties and suffering with her mother or ask for help because she got married in spite of her mother's strong opposition to her decision. As an example, she said that she had to go back to her house two days after she moved out due to fighting and yelling. She slept in her car with her little son for two days because she did not have any place to go. She also mentioned that she talked to her friends, but they just listened to her and shared their own marital issues. Their conversations often ended with criticism of her spouse's drinking: "There was no solution, even though I talked to my friends ... In sharing my status, being understood and agreed with were a bit comforting, but there was no solution to my problems ..."

Even though she did not have family members or friends who were helpful in dealing with and solving her marital conflicts, Sevin was concerned about her family's reputation as she considered getting divorced. She grew up in a Christian family that had been Christian since her grandmother's conversion, and being a Christian family and keeping the faith for generations was something they were proud of. In addition, her family members felt proud that they had no family members who were divorced. Recognizing this family pride, she felt pressured not to get a divorce, and she did not talk about her situation with her family.

I did not even ask ... I wasn't sure how she [her mother] would be and how she would think. It was only my conjecture. Because I have never talked to my mother, I'm not sure how she thinks, but I think she would be hurt by it [Sevin getting divorced].

When Jina (in her 40's) experienced her husband's explosive anger and instrumental abuse for the first time, she talked to her parents and discussed what she

could do. What she remembered when recalling that incident was that her parents, especially her father, was distressed by her situation for a few days. Then, she thought that she could not talk about her situation with her parents again, because she did not want to give them any burdens, agony, or shame. One of her reasons for not getting divorced was also her concern for her parents: she thought that divorce would be an undutiful thing to her parents and would ruin her father's reputation. Even though her parents allowed her to get divorced, she did not want to feel guilty and ruin her father's reputation because of divorce in the family. Whenever her parents looked down in shame, she did not want to think that she was the reason. It was scary for her to think about these things.

Jina had talked about her situation with a woman whom she had known and trusted when she was deeply frustrated by her husband's verbal, emotional, and instrumental abuse with explosive anger. When Jina asked whether she should get a divorce, this woman told her not to do it. The woman said, "If others asked you to do it, I would say to do it. But, I don't want to encourage you to do it, because a person doesn't need to get divorced due to domestic violence." Jina said that she was not able to understand what this woman said at that time, but she realized eight years later that marriage or divorce is something very complicated and became thankful for her friend's advice given out of care and concern. In thinking of divorce, another concern Jina had was the fact that there had been no one among her relatives and friends who had gotten divorced. She said that she did not want to feel left alone or a sense of alienation and to be the odd one as a result of divorce. She also spoke of discrimination against divorced women in Korean society.

Julie (in her 40's) used to not talk about her marital issues with her family because, on the one hand, it was shameful. On the other hand, they would suffer, knowing about her situation. However, she indicated her parents' influence in dealing with her marital conflicts.

Now I think that I learned it from my parents. My parents had never given me any guidelines, but they sometimes told me to endure ... So, I thought in their way without realizing it. But, they did not say it that often. It was my personality ... At that time, I did not have any intention of developing myself in a sense. Also, my husband had a strong personality in those days ... As a result, I must have repressed my thoughts and feelings ...

Julie talked about her marital struggles with her mother for the first time when she struggled with whether she should live with her husband after living separately for a year due to his work. Julie and her husband thought of divorce when they began to live separately, because they had struggled and suffered from continuous marital conflicts and fights. Julie and her husband thought that they had done their responsibility and their best so far. After six months of separation, her husband asked her come to his place. That was when Julie sought out her mother for advice. Her mother encouraged her to give her husband another chance because men and men's thoughts can change when they experience more of the world. Her mother also said that she would support Julie's decision if her marriage did not work out after giving it a second chance. Julie agreed and accepted her mother's advice without knowing that her husband planned to apologize to her when she went to his home. She mentioned that she has often given authority to her mother in her decision-making processes because her mother is very careful and thoughtful.

Julie sometimes shared her situation with her friends, but she mostly spent time by herself in order to recover when she became stressed out. She felt relief when she was

heard, even though her friends did not give her any solutions. However, she also mentioned her experience of being betrayed by a close friend in the past. Julie and her friend sometimes shared their marital struggles, and her friend eventually got divorced. One day, Julie experienced difficulties with others because her friend had shared Julie's stories with some of them. After feeling betrayed by her close friend, she became careful about talking about her marital issues with others.

Jisu (in her 50's) has talked about her situation with her sister, friends, family members, church members, and her pastor's wife. Since she has lived apart from her husband due to his business, her family and church members have often encouraged her to move to her husband's place and work together to solve their relational and financial problems. However, she indicated that she had made her own decision, rather than following others' advice.

I have talked to my sister, friends, and pastor's wife. They listened because I talked to them. I felt good because I let it out, but I didn't seek any advice. It is my way ... Human beings make their own decisions in spite of others' opinions. In the end, they follow their own way ...

When Jisu considered divorce due to marital conflicts and her husband's adultery, she took into consideration many things, such as her parents' life, the experience of divorced women and remarried women she has known, and people she has met at work. While her parents had struggled with marital conflicts and abuse, they still lived together and took care of each other. Seeing this, she said it would be better to live together and take care of one another because couples who do so remain together. Jisu was aware of the difficulties of divorced women who have emotionally and financially struggled after divorce and remarried women who have struggled with various marital issues in their second marriages. Her experiences of hearing people's stories in her workplace also

made her realize the prevalence of men's adultery and the differences between men and women. These variables have affected her decision to live with her husband.

In dealing with marital conflicts, some choose divorce as an easy way in order to avoid struggles or due to fear, without making any efforts to save their marriages ... Marriage is not a matter of divorce and remarriage ... People marry with some expectations, whether it's the first or second marriage, but the second marriage will become similar to the first in two or three years ... There is no new world. It is like creating another form of bondage ... another fence ... Where people are, they have to do their best.

When Hanna (in her 50's) stayed at her parents' house for a month due to her husband's adultery, her mother talked to her about taking responsibility for what she has chosen. Her mother said that she is responsible for her children and her husband in that she chose her husband. Also, her mother gave her the advice to live as far as she could and to make a decision if the problems persisted. Considering her mother's advice along with other factors, she agreed to move back in with her husband. After her husband cheated on her a third time, she decided to be separated. Now that she has lived separately from her husband for a year, her parents have asked Hanna to forgive and accept her husband, while her sisters have given Hanna the freedom to make her own decision and supported it.

In deciding for separation, Hanna also talked to her in-laws. Her husband's family considered adultery something all men can do and asked Hanna to put up with him and his actions. Her husband's brother even said, "He got caught because he was inattentive and careless." Her husband's family and even her father consider men's adultery acceptable because they had done it in the past. When Hanna talked to a friend regarding her marital issues, her friend encouraged her to become rebellious in dealing with her husband's attitudes and also move out of the "water puddle" into which she seems to

keep falling. After sharing others' advice, Hanna said that she herself is the one who made the final decision, after reflecting on her own thoughts and others' advice: "I listened ... but, I made the decision ... Anyway, I take responsibility for my decision. My decision is important ... no matter what others said ... Others, whether my mother or my friends, don't have to live with my decision..."

Even though she made a decision to live separately from her husband, Hanna wondered how hard it would be to live as a divorced woman by telling the stories of divorced women who have struggled and have been depressed after divorcing. She was also concerned about social discrimination against divorced women and child rearing issues after divorcing in Korean society. She said, "It is hard to live together and it is hard to live separately. This does not mean that people are happy because they live together. It also doesn't mean that people are unhappy because they live separately."

Mia (in her 60's) has asked for help from her sister, neighbors, church friends, and a pastor, but was disappointed by their comments. Some of them did not believe her after hearing what her husband had said to her, and some gossiped about her situation. Some blamed her for her husband's adultery, and some rebuked her saying, "In spite of adultery, it should be okay if a man still gives you money for living." While some castigated her for not tolerating her husband's behaviors, her sister chastised her for staying with her husband by calling her "a foolish woman." To Mia, none of them seemed to understand her situation and what she wanted; as a result, she began revealing only parts of her stories to some trustworthy people.

Individuals have different personalities. They believe they are right ... So, even though they are friends, I think I need to stand firm, and I don't need to reveal everything to others ... When I revealed my situation to some, they also gossiped about me and sneered at me. I trusted them, but sometimes they didn't ... [they

did not seem helpful]. It was not helpful ... I partially release my stress in telling my stories, but I don't share too much ... There is no forever friend ... only God does not bear a grudge after I share my stories ... Human beings are not permanent ...

In terms of divorce, Mia mentioned that she did not want to get divorced under any circumstance; she just wanted to live a happy life with her husband without abuse and violence. She considered divorce a shameful and disgraceful thing to do and something God does not want. In addition, she believed that her children would feel shame, too. When she thought of divorce, she said that she was reminded of the biblical message, "Even though I forgave through death on the cross, how can you not forgive? ..." She said that she tried her best to live an honorable life. If she got divorced, she thought that it would ruin everything. Her religion and religious beliefs have been the main factors affecting her decision-making process. However, she also mentioned that it would be good for her and her husband to get divorced once, because it would awaken them in a way.

Along with her religious beliefs, her sister's husband—who is a faithful Christian—pastors, and divorced women in her church have affected her decision-making process. Mia took advice from her sister's husband, pastors, and God. After hearing about her situation, her sister's husband wrote a letter, introduced the story of Hosea, and asked her to forgive her husband. Pastors who heard her story often called and visited to take care of her, encouraging her to pray and endure. One of Mia's friends got divorced due to her ex-husband's adultery and remarried. This friend's children from her first marriage had conflicts with their stepfather, she felt some distance from her stepchildren, and she was always careful to read her husband's countenance. Mia's divorced friends shared their difficulties with remarriage, such as feeling like they had to take care of six parents.

Nami (in her 60's) presented that the admonitions and advice from her parents and parents-in-law seemed to be more conservative and traditional than that received by any other women I interviewed. The reason for this could be related to her generation and location, being in a rural, farming area. Nami was forced to live with her family-in-law after marriage by her parents-in-law in order to learn her husband's family traditions and customs, while her husband lived in another city due to his work. She also expressed that she had learned from her parents that she should live with her husband and keep her family together no matter what happened. For this reason, when she confronted marital conflicts and struggles, she did not talk about her marital difficulties with her parents and tried to endure her suffering. She hesitated to talk about her marital life with others because of shame, and she isolated herself from others. She even expressed that she often thought of ending her life as a result of her chronic marital disturbances.

I was not able to talk about anything to others because of shame. I did not talk ... at that time. I did not talk to my parents. I did not even go out. I isolated myself. In thinking about it at this point, I think I had depression and got psychologically ruined. My husband went out, and I lived alone ... After my children moved out because of their school and work, it became much harder to live alone Then ... I closed a door and decided to kill myself. I felt that it was useless to live in this way. I did not eat. I went out at night, wandered around town, and came back tired. Nobody came to see me; I also did not go out.

Nami also indicated that her family-in-law, including the two brothers-in-law and two sisters-in-law she had raised, had ignored her suffering and took their brother's side no matter what he had done to her. Nami mentioned that they even went out of their way to say that their brother did not come home because of her, blamed her as a reason for her marital conflicts, and isolated her from others in her small town.

Nami presented two women who cared for her: a female Christian relative in her 80's and a young Christian woman in her town. Nami shared that this relative

occasionally came to see her, encouraged her to eat, and invited her to go to church rather than stay at home by herself all the time. Nami also stated that this relative met with her husband and rebuked him for what he had done to Nami. Nami felt thankful for her caring and her invitation to church, while she felt upset and betrayed by her family-in-law, who were Buddhists and did not care for and ignored her. Her experience of attending church for the first time did not affect her because she was not able to understand what she heard. However, a young Christian woman in her town encouraged her to attend another church, and a pastor and a pastor's wife in this church have continuously prayed and cared for her since that time. They inspired her to decide to become a Christian.

In sum, for all the research participants, their own perspectives as well as others' perspectives on marriage and divorce have played significant roles not only in dealing with marital conflicts, abuse, and violence, but also in their decision-making processes related to separation or divorce. This is the case even though different levels of authority have been given to others, depending on the research participants.

Changes in Themselves and Their Husbands

According to the literature, some women remain in conflictive and abusive relationships in the hopes that their husbands will change. In my interviews, research participants presented not only their own changes, but also their husband's changes as they looked back on their marital relationships. Sevin mainly presented her changes as she discussed how her husband had changed a little bit due to his stroke. Before getting married, Sevin thought of marriage as a place where she could escape from her mother and as a way to be free. When she confronted marital conflicts and difficulties, she often

thought of leaving her husband. In addition, she had wanted to get away from the “fenced arena” of religion since middle school. According to Sevin, she wanted to get away from “any fences,” whether they were her mother, husband, or religion. She also named herself in the past as being proud, stubborn, unpersuadable, rebellious, and disobedient, in that she had not listened to her mother and had abused alcohol, tobacco, and computer games to release stress from her marriage. While doing these things, she had felt empty and useless; she felt like she was losing or scattering her identity.

However, Sevin began to listen to sermons uploaded to YouTube in order to not only stop playing games, drinking, and smoking, but also to find the basis for her being. Then, she had an experience of encountering God: “One day, I believed in God and realized that I was nothing. If I don’t depend on God, there is nothing I can achieve in the world. There will be broken relationship and uselessness.” Sevin said that she eventually returned to the “fence” of God. She believed that it was God’s grace that brought her back to God, and she became thankful for meeting her husband and getting married. Sevin’s change was not only religious, but also existential and spiritual in that she solved her long-time struggle to find her “basis” for being.

I have been changed in the framework of the family God gave me for 24 years. My bad personality has been changed ... I think it was a kind of training process.... It was a kind of opportunity to understand and know God and also to be faithful ... I thought I could be free [if I got married], but it has been a training place where I couldn’t be free ... In thinking about it, at this point, I’m thankful for being married, even though I fiercely fought with him ... I’m thankful for meeting him because I have been changed ...

It is ironic ... Even though I felt hurt and also offended by my husband’s mind, I am thankful when I look back ... I was too proud and stubborn to hear others’ opinions ... a disobedient person ... rebellious person ... used aggressive language. But, my husband was also proud and stubborn ... We fought a lot from the beginning ... One day I realized that it was useless to continuously fight. The more we fought, the more the situation got worse ... It was meaningless to

continue being married.... So, we became indifferent to each other. My husband and I were estranged from one another ... Then, one day, I met God ... I began believing in God and realized that I wouldn't be able to get anything if I didn't depend on God ... All of a sudden, I felt I became alive when I depended on God. Then, I became thankful in that I felt reborn and realized such things because I went through this process. If I had lived without any problems, I wouldn't have been able to have these feelings of recovery and the importance of family and God.

As presented, through God, Sevin's personality and perspectives changed.

According to her, she became faithful and began considering marriage and family something she wants to keep and make her life happy. She said she is thankful because her marital conflicts led her to know God, and her relationship with her husband and her child helped her to understand her relationship with God. Her changed perspective changed her attitude toward her husband and improved her relationship with him. In addition, her husband has changed a bit in acknowledging her changes.

Jina indicated not only her change in perspectives, but also her husband's changes. She said that her perspectives regarding communication styles, conflicts, and marriage had shifted. She used to think that communication had to be like a fair trade: "If he asks for 50% from me, he also needs to give me 50% ... It is like a trade ... exact equality." For her, equality was important in various matters, including household chores and relationships with in-laws. However, her husband tried to have control and power and expected her to go along with him. When he expressed his anger and verbally and instrumentally abused her, she always thought of divorce. She considered conflicts to be bad and felt they should not exist. Since she had not experienced conflicts in her family of origin, it was unfamiliar and uncomfortable for her to face conflicts in her marital relationship. Sometimes she wanted to get rid of them as soon as possible; sometimes she wanted to escape from them; and sometimes she pretended she did not have them. She

did not want to confront conflicts and work through them. However, her perspectives have changed as she has realized that communication styles and conflict management styles are different based on different personalities and family backgrounds. She has also come to understand that marriage and divorce are very complex.

I realized that it is very complicated, whether it's marriage or divorce ... Something happened? Get a divorce. Repeated? Get a divorce ... I had a simple image in my mind ... However, I realized that it is more complicated than my image. We have to consider various possibilities, such as whether it is possible for a person to change or what kind of circumstance a person has ... I think that divorce is something we need to decide at the end ... something to decide after trying everything else ... Marital relationships have various factors in them beyond conflicts ... If couples have something to shield them or something more important than any problems, they will be able to live ... they should live together ... However, if psychological or physical safety is threatened or if a person does not endure, it would depend on a person's decision.

Along with realizing that marriage is difficult, Jina thought of marital conflicts as “homework” for couples to work out. While she used to avoid conflict and escape into visions of divorce, she has now become confrontational and is taking responsibility and trying to solve marital conflicts. In addition, she mentioned that her self-esteem has improved as she has recognized that she has endured suffering, solved some of her marital conflicts, and overcome difficulties.

I think that marriage has trained me ... in many ways ... I had to stand firm in my marital relationship. So, I began standing on my own in a sense, without being controlled by my husband ... Overcoming suffering, solving relational conflicts, and enduring helped me to improve my self-esteem. I also felt a sense of accomplishment.

Jina also pointed out the changes in her husband. Her husband has gradually changed since they had their second child. Her husband was a fearful father, but he became attentive. Jina gave her husband credit in that he has the ability to realize something and change himself even though it takes time; it was “a potential” she

discovered in her husband. In addition, since her husband participated in a nonviolent communication program provided by a church, he has learned how to solve conflicts and recently tried to talk with Jina without being angry. She pointed out that her husband has tried to suppress his anger, and he has realized that he cannot win by showing his anger because then he has to suffer the consequences. At the end of our interview, she acknowledged the efforts she and her husband have made in their 17 years of marriage: “When I look back, it was not that bad. We have been doing okay. Both of us, my husband and I, have done some tough work dealing with our marital conflicts, even though there are unresolved issues.”

In the case of Julie, she talked about her husband’s changes in terms of their relationship: “It changed. It changed a lot. Fundamentally, my husband was changed.” As mentioned earlier, there was a year that she and her husband lived separately due to his work. At that time, she felt really good and free. But, taking her mother’s advice, she moved to her husband’s place to give him a second chance after a year. On the night she arrived at his place, according to Julie, her husband apologized for what he had done to her, mainly controlling and limiting her freedom and free will, and asked her to forgive him. Her husband told her that he had never thought he was wrong before, but realized he had done something “crazy” and how important human beings’ freedom is. When she heard his words, she felt like everything was resolved and released. Since then, her husband has continuously reflected on himself and made an effort to change his attitude; therefore, she was able to recover her trust in and relationship with him in spite of occasional conflicts and fights. Even though Julie indicated her own change in terms of her belief four years ago, I did not include this change in this section because her religion

and religious beliefs have not played important roles in dealing with her marital conflicts—these had already been mostly settled when she became born again four years ago.

Jisu presented some changes in her perspectives and life attitude. She shared her changed perspective regarding marriage. Before Jisu got married, she did not have any specific ideas regarding marriage and just thought marriage was part of a developmental task or course. When she looked back, she named her marriage as something very complex and used the word “training” in recalling her 29 years of marital life:

When I think of marriage, it is complicated ... complicated ... It is not simple; it is hard to explain it in a sentence ... I did not feel good with my husband ... It could not be called suffering ... it was not happiness, either ... It is something I need to do my best at ...

I feel that I got trained or disciplined (*hunryeonbadda*) a lot ... like a training camp ... So, I became strong. I used to be weak ... I was not good at fighting, but I became strong. It is a positive side of my marriage in a sense.

Jisu indicated that she became more courageous and confident in her life. After she found out about her husband’s adultery, she changed her mind about submitting a divorce file she had prepared because she was not confident that she could live by herself as a divorced woman in Korean society. Even though she recently decided to live with him again, she said that she became confident about living by herself because she managed her family without financial support from her husband for years and without her husband’s presence for three years due to his work. Jisu said that money is not a reason why she decided to live with him at this point. In terms of her husband, Jisu noted that her husband had changed and began going to church because of her prayers in the past. However, she said that he was not faithful. She did not discuss her husband’s changes beyond his religious attitudes.

Hanna described her husband as a person who cannot change. She said that she used to think he could change; for this reason, she took him back twice in spite of his infidelity. However, her husband has continuously spent time with other women, not communicated with her, and not provided enough money for living expenses, while spending money on other women. After the second incidence of adultery, she thought her husband had changed because she maintained a good relationship with him. She also said that she made an effort to be a good wife, thinking his adultery could be related to her. However, when it happened again a year ago, she felt deeply betrayed by her husband and considered his infidelity his own problem. Hanna concluded that her husband had prioritized other women or his non-home life, rather than her and her family, so she decided to divorce him. Her husband has been upset because Hanna will not forgive and accept him back.

While Hanna did not indicate any changes in her husband, she presented her changes and her effort to change herself. When she found out about her husband's infidelity the first time, she decided to change herself rather than waiting for her husband to change. She had stayed at home despite her desire to work because of her husband's opposition to her working. Since her husband had not made enough money to support her, she suffered financially and decided to move to a city and begin working. While she worked, she also participated in classes in such areas as leadership, computers, debate, presentation making, and coaching, and she achieved some licenses. Through these experiences and programs, she achieved the self-confidence that she can do something. She said that she used to be self-confident before getting married, but she had been suppressed by her husband who always considered himself better than her. She said that

she has reflected on herself a lot and become mature and grown through her marriage and suffering in her life. In looking back on her marriage and life, she said,

Life is half and half in the long run. Half happiness ... half suffering ... half joy ... [like *heeroaerak* (희노애락, 喜怒哀樂) meaning that life conveys happiness, anger, sadness, and joy]... I'm just enthusiastically walking in my given life ...

At the end of our interview, she shared her hope that this experience, whether it was separation or divorce, would be a turning point that facilitated change in herself and her husband.

Mia and Nami both presented their religious changes in dealing with their marital conflicts. Mia shared that she had occasionally attended churches when she was young, but she became faithful when she confronted marital conflicts. Mia also indicated that her husband changed his mind about living with her again when her husband's friend rebuked him for his attitude toward her. Mia said that the divorce period of three years gave her and her husband a wake-up call. They changed in some ways and he goes to church with her almost every week.

Nami also presented her own changes after she became a Christian ten years ago. While she almost gave up on living and was deeply depressed by her husband's irresponsible attitudes toward her and their family and his continuous infidelity, she felt relieved after she went to church and prayed while crying. Nami stated that she was moved by the prayers and care of a pastor and his wife at the church she visited and began to enthusiastically attend worship services. From that time on, she thought that she could only rely on God. Nami said that she never went to the Buddhist temple after she started attending church, and she threw away all her materials for ancestor worship. She shared that she was able to sleep and eat after she began going to church.

It had been hard for me to fall asleep. But, whenever I went to church or early morning service, I was able to sleep and felt comfortable. I felt so good ... Before that time, my face looked pale and ruined. After I went to church, I felt that my face looked better because I felt good ... I cried a lot. I cried a lot. There must be no one who has cried that much ... God must like me. God called me to go to church because God does not want me to die.

Nami went to church almost every day to pray and accompanied a pastor, his wife, and church members when they visited other church members. After she became a Christian, she broke her isolation and developed relationships with others. She mentioned that she began to ask for help and prayed for her pastor, the pastor's wife, and some faithful church members. She even shared her marital experiences with other church members who had suffered from their own situations. Nami also divulged her efforts to change her personality and temper after she became a Christian. While Nami talked about her changes, she stated that her husband had not changed, although she implied he had changed a little when he was older. When she took care of her husband during his later years, she said that he sometimes went with her to church and attended worship services. Nami said, "He occasionally went to church with me. He must be moved by me or my attitude. I had to show rather than tell him ..."

In sum, research participants expressed not only their own changes, but also their husband's changes as they looked back on their marital relationships, and the changes in themselves and their husbands have affected their relationships and their decision-making process.

Compassion for Their Husbands (ansreoum and bulsangham)

In the literature, love and a "traumatic bond" are considered to be reasons why women stay in conflictive and abusive marital relationships. As a result of my reflections on these observations, I asked research participants about their feelings for their spouses.

Sevin, Jina, Julie, Jisu, Hanna, and Nami often used the words *ansreoum* (안쓰러움), *bulsangham* (불쌍함), *jeong* (정), *yeonmin* (연민, 憐愍 or 憐憫), *cheukeunjisim* (측은지심, 惻隱之心), and *ja-bi* (자비, 慈悲). These Korean terms used by research participants have similar meanings and implications and can be translated to English words such as compassion, pity, mercy, sympathy, or benevolence:

ansreoum (안쓰러움) : feel sorry and uneasy; pity
bulsangham (불쌍함): poor; pitiable; pitiful; piteous; miserable; wretched; pathetic; touching
jeong (정): feeling(s); sentient; emotion(s); heart; human nature; pity; compassion
yeonmin (연민): compassion; pity; mercy; commiseration; poor; pitiful; piteous; miserable; wretched; pathetic; touching
cheukeunjisim (측은지심): pity; compassion; commiseration; sympathy
ja-bi (자비, 慈悲): mercy; benevolence; compassion; pity; charity³³

In this section, I present these women's descriptions of their feelings. In Chapter 5, their feelings of *ansreoum*, *bulsangham*, *jeong*, *yeonmin*, and *cheukeunjisim* will be more thoroughly discussed.

Sevin used to fight with her husband and later became indifferent to him.

However, she said that she began to feel *ansreoum* for her husband eight years ago when her husband became sick.

I felt *ansreoum* ... I continued thinking of divorce, but I gave up on the idea of divorce when he became sick. I did not want hear, "She threw her husband out due to his disease." So, I stopped thinking about divorce. It was eight years ago, even before I met God. I endured it of my own volition. I had to accept him ... But, it was hard because he became depressed and obstinate about senseless points as a result of his disease ... I felt frustrated, wondering how I could live with him, and became depressed, too. Then, everything was solved after I became changed in faith. If I had not come to know God, oh, my God! ... It would have been hard and painful.

³³ YBM Sisa.com, <http://ybmallinall.com/>

She indicated that she felt *ansreoum* for her husband before she met God. She said that she endured the difficulties of taking care of her husband using her own volition. It is possible that she naturally felt *ansreoum*, and it is also possible that she felt *ansreoum* and endured because she had been influenced by her religious beliefs, since she was born a Christian. She also mentioned that she felt *ansreoum* for herself in that she had to take care of her husband physically and spiritually.

I felt *ansreoum* toward myself. If I had lived with a perfect person, I could just follow him, but I had to lead him in a sense ... I had to take care of him not only in a physical manner, but also in a spiritual manner.

When I asked Jina about her feelings for her husband, she said that she felt that her husband was unstable or incomplete, while she felt stable and substantial when thinking of herself. She also said that she felt anxious when she thought about her husband because of her worries that he would cause problems at his work or in his relationships with others. Jina also points out that she felt *ansreoum* for her husband because his life must be painful as a result of not loving himself and because he suffered from his mother's treatment of him. Her feeling of *ansreoum* seemed to be based on her understanding of her husband's personality and family background.

In the case of Julie, she responded that she felt mixed feelings for her husband. During the interview, she mentioned that she felt *ansreoum* when she heard about her husband's childhood and the life difficulties he went through. Before she solved her marital issues with her husband, she said that it was painful for her to live with him. However, once her husband apologized for what he had done, she was able to understand him and felt *ansreoum* for him because he had experienced an unhappy childhood in a disturbed and poor family and had had to take care of himself and his younger sister as

well. She understood his obsession with women based on the lack of love and support in his family and his desire to become a successful, moral person unlike his father.

Julie also mentioned that her feelings for her husband were a bit different from love and asked me what it means to love. I responded, “The definition would be different depending on the people defining it; for some, it is romantic love; for some, it is *jeong*; for some, it is responsibility.” After hearing this comment, she said, “If I understand it in that way, I have love ... *miun-jeong* and *goun-jeong* ... sometimes resentment ... various minds ... It is hard to tell if it is all love ... paradoxical. It is love having hate. It is hate, but not 100%.” For this reason, she felt that she was not good enough, in that she did not do her best with all her heart in spite of her effort to take responsibility in her marital relationship on the surface. In addition, she sometimes felt disappointed and frustrated by her husband in that he planned his own life and did not ask her what she wanted to do for herself. In that regard, she felt her husband has been selfish. At the end of our interview, she shared that it would be hard for her to manage and live her life if she did not have faith and become mature in faith.

The main reason for Jisu’s recent decision to move to her husband’s place in another country was her love, *ansreoum*, *bulsangham*, *jeong*, and *yeonmin*, toward her husband. Before she saw him a month ago, she was angry and did not want to see him or live with him again. When she visited her husband in the country where he was working, she originally planned to check on whether he had money and a woman. But she found out that he did not have either, lived in poor conditions, and was trying to make money by himself. Seeing him in this position made her understand his situation, and she felt *jeong*,

ansreoum, *bulsangham*, and *yeonmin* for him. She also mentioned that she was not able to submit the divorce file she had prepared because of her *bulsangham* and *yeonmin*.

I had three children, met him when I was 23, and had *miun-jeong* and *goun-jeong* ... Even though he was not good in some respects, it was not all. He believed in me. He was proud of me ... He depended on me ... Even though he cheated on me, I understood it as a kind of disease ... I was able to do what I wanted to do ... If he had only lied or gambled, I would not have been able to live with him ...

In dealing with her husband's adultery, Jisu also expressed her *dongjeong* and *yeonmin* for her husband because she understood his suffering in his family of origin.

He had a stepfather and did not receive care and love from his mom ... It is not like he does not like me ... he is a bit sick in that matter, such as having a sex addiction and a drug addiction. I seemed to fill his empty heart through his relationships with women... It is a kind of psychological flaw. I could understand it. I was loved by my parents a lot ... So, I understood ... If I couldn't have forgiven him, I couldn't have lived with him. However, since I have *dongjeong* and *yeonmin*, I forgive him. He is not a bad person. He is vulnerable ... In thinking back, he let me feel very maternal toward him even though he did not do it intentionally...

Jisu also used the word love in describing her feelings for her husband, and this love was based on her religion and religious teachings. In addition, she acknowledged that it might originate from genuine love for human beings.

It is love ... love toward people, based on God's Word. Love, sacrifice, and concession ... If I didn't give way, nothing could be done ... He is my children's father and a person I have loved, even though I tried to get divorced twice ... It is like agape love toward human beings ... My mother's and grandmother's generations embraced and lived with [their abusive husbands] because of genuine love for humans beings, whether they believed in Jesus or not.

In thinking about herself, she felt proud of herself in that she did her best in her life and learned a lot from her marital experiences.

Hanna responded that she often felt *bulsangham* and *cheukeunjisim* while living with her husband. She said that she must be the one who can understand her husband well because she has tried to understand his personality and his family background in dealing

with marital conflicts. She felt *bulsangham* and *cheukeunjisim* for him in that he has had inner stress because he has not been able to do what he would like to do due to his lack of ability. She considered him weak because he could not change himself and his life. Nevertheless, she said that she does not need to accept him, even though she understands him and felt *bulsangham* for him. She said that he is responsible for what he has done. Regarding her feelings for herself, Hanna presented that she felt *ansreoum* for herself due to the fact that she ended up separating and had to take responsibility for her life and her children. She also shared that her main feeling for others is *ansreoum*: “I feel *ansreoum* for my mother, my father, and my sister ... I feel *ansreoum* for my father-in-law as an old, lonely person because he has not been taken in by his own children and has been living by himself.

Nami also used the word *bulsangham* when she described her feelings toward her husband. When she heard from her younger son about her husband’s hospitalization due to lumbar disc disease, she went to take care of her husband because she did not want her child to suffer due to his father having problems with mobility. After that time, she took care of her husband until his death, based on both her faith in God and her feeling of *bulsangham* for him, not as her husband, but as a human being.

I took care of him because of God and because of *bulsangham* ... I felt *bulsangham* for him, as a person, not as my man. I deeply felt *bulsangham* in thinking about his lifetime ... Sometimes, it came to my mind that he would have had a different life if he had not met or lived with me ... Sometimes, I felt guilty, thinking he had a hard life because of me ... I was also not able to treat him harshly since he was my children’s father ... So, I lived with him.

In addition, she mentioned that she did not have any *jeong* (*mu-jeong*) for her husband since he had done so many things to her that eliminated *jeong*; rather, she felt anger and

disgrace when thinking of her husband. Nami felt *bulsangham* for her husband as a human being, but she felt no *jeong* for him as her husband.

In sum, research participants presented their feelings for their husbands by using the Korean terms, *ansreoum*, *bulsangham*, *jeong*, *yeonmin*, and *cheukeunjisim*, and the issues related to these terms will be deeply explored in Chapter 5.

Responsibility and Duty

Sevin, Jina, Jisu, Hanna, and Mia also used Korean words that can be translated as *responsibility*, *duty*, *obligation*, or *volition* in discussing their marital experiences. They indicated responsibility as a reason for living with their husbands or as an important trait for couples to have in marriage. In the literature review, women's love and traumatic bonds were explained in relation to women's responsibility in that they loved their spouses, felt sorry and responsible for them, and wanted to help them in spite of their suffering.³⁴ Even though it is not clear whether their perspective on responsibility has any connection with their religious beliefs or their feelings for their spouses, they present similar ideas regarding the concept of responsibility in marriage and life in spite of their religious differences.

Sevin appeared to feel responsible for her husband when he became sick, in that she said that she endured her difficulties in taking care of him of her own volition. Jina also mentioned that she felt a responsibility and an obligation to create a happy life with her husband. She said that she had hoped to gradually achieve happiness in her relationship through mutual caring. For Mia, the marital relationship is something God wanted her to maintain in spite of her suffering: "Marriage was painful ... It was all my

³⁴ Martin, 40; Gaddis, 16.

hardship ... There will be suffering and agony everywhere ...” Therefore, Mia seemed to consider marriage her duty.

Jisu and Hanna specifically talked about the importance of responsibility in marriage; they used to think that they were responsible for their husbands and children because they were part of the lives they had chosen. When asked about her understanding of marriage, Jisu responded,

When I think of marriage, it is complicated.... I did not feel good with my husband ... It could not be called suffering ... it was not happiness, either ... It is something I need to do my best at ... Whether it is considered something people need to do, like as a rite of passage or as something people have to do at least once, they have to do their best.... It is a human being's duty. To take responsibility ... Um ... It is very complicated ... It is something I need to suppress and endure in my case. It is related to suffering, endurance, courage, and so on for me. It includes waiting ... Everything is in it ... In spite of it all, I have done my best ... [crying] ... I feel like everything is in it.

If I think of cause and effect in my life, I cannot criticize him. It is my personality. It is all my responsibility. It is my responsibility because I decided to marry him. It is my responsibility that I chose him; it is my responsibility that I borrowed money from my father. Everything was my choice and decision that I made I was incompetent and did not have self-confidence to live alone at that time; so, I wasn't able to file for divorce, even though I prepared a divorce file. Human beings have to be responsible for their lives ... This has been in my mind since I was young ... Eventually, it is my responsibility.

Hanna also stated that marriage and maintaining a marital relationship means taking responsibility:

It is something I need to do my best to be responsible for because I chose it. Take responsibility for my children. Take responsibility for my husband ... I did not know before I got married ... but, there are so many things to take responsibility for.

According to Hanna, her conflicts with her husband have been based on different personalities and family backgrounds, lack of communication, and her husband's infidelity. For her, all these issues are related to the issue of responsibility. Her husband

has not provided enough money for living expenses, and yet he has not allowed her to work outside the home. He has spent time and money taking care of other women, while he has not communicated with Hanna and has neglected Hanna's and her children's struggles. He has cheated on Hanna three times, but he has not shown concern for Hanna's feelings; instead, he has asked her to accept him as he is. To Hanna, he has been irresponsible to his family in financial, emotional, and communication matters, and he has not thought that what he has done was a problem. Hanna said, "For him, home is a place to rest, not a place to take responsibility." When she found out that he cheated on her again a year ago, she decided to get separated and thought of divorce.

Nevertheless, she mentioned that she might live with her husband if he becomes seriously sick, like if he gets cancer, because she does not want her children to have to take on the burden and responsibility of caring for him instead of her. This life attitude is also presented in Nami's story, even though she did not use the terms responsibility or duty when describing her marital life. In spite of her husband's emotional and financial irresponsibility, Nami took care of her husband until his death because she did not want to burden her children; she likely considered caring for her sick husband to be her duty and responsibility rather than her children's. Thus, for Jisu, Hanna, Mia, and Nami, their marriages convey suffering, but they felt they were responsible for taking care of their marital relations.

In sum, Sevin, Jina, Jisu, Hanna, Mia, and Nami used the terms responsibility, duty, obligation, or volition in discussing their marital experiences and indicated these aspects as an important element in keeping their marriages.

Economics of Divorce and Concern for Children

Finances and children are also considered to be significant aspects of women's decision-making processes in terms of their marital relationships. Among my research participants, Sevin, Mia, and Nami mentioned that finances were concerns when thinking of divorce. According to Sevin, she got married right after graduation and had not engaged in any economic activities since getting marriage, so finances were one of the concerns she had when she considered divorce. She shared that she would have definitely gotten divorced when she experienced marital difficulties if she had had the ability to financially support herself. For Sevin, the financial issue was also related to her relational concerns for her child. When Sevin lost her father at the age of 7, she was not taken care of by her mother, who had to work for a living, so she did not have a chance to feel intimacy with her. She said that she did not want to be a woman like her mother, who was strong and always busy earning money. She hesitated to get a divorce because she did not want to repeat the life of her mother. She said, "I was afraid of breaking the close relationship with my only child because I had to go to work." According to Sevin, raising a child without a father was not her concern in thinking of divorce; rather, breaking her relationship with her child was. Sevin also worried that her child might go astray if she got divorced.

For Mia and Nami, being in their 60's, financial considerations have been a main reason for not getting divorced. Since they are from an older generation, it would be much harder for them to go out and find work in Korean society. However, Mia also said that she would not get divorced even if she had the financial resources, due to her belief in God, as described earlier. For Mia, the anticipated difficulties for her children were one

of her concerns in thinking of divorce. She believed that her children would suffer due to shame and the social stigma attached to children with divorced mothers.

Nami also pointed out that finances and her children were reasons she did not think about getting divorced. She mentioned that she might have gotten divorced if she could have had enough alimony. Her husband did not have money or a job, and she did not want to walk out of her marriage empty-handed. In addition, she noted the influences of a fortuneteller's comment and her older child's response when she considered divorce. In dealing with her marital conflicts, she went to a fortuneteller before she became a Christian, and this person told Nami to keep her family together because the ancestors in her family had given her a son (her oldest child) who was smart and intelligent. From that time on, she relied on her son and endured her suffering in her family. She stated, "He was my hope and dream. He was smart and good ..." In addition, her decision not to get divorce was affected by her son's attitude. When her son was grown up, Nami asked him what he thought about his parents getting divorced. He responded that it was up to her whether to live with her husband or not, and he asked her where he would have to go or where he would consider his home to be if she decided not to live with his father. Then he did not say anything else. In confronting her son's response and silence, Nami said that she realized that her son would not come to see her and even felt that she would be betrayed by her son if she did not live with her husband. For this reason, she never thought about getting divorced and decided to endure and stay with her family.

For Jina, Julie, Jisu, and Hanna, finances were not main concerns when considering divorce. Jina and Julie have had their own careers making money. For Jina, her children were her concern when she contemplated divorce. Jina wondered whether

such a decision would result in her children losing their father's presence in their lives. Since her husband played particular roles in her family, she wondered how she would respond to her children when her children missed their father and felt his absence. In the case of Jisu, she said that in the past she did not have any confidence that she could make a living following divorce. In addition, she had decided to accept her husband because her child missed him when he was absent. However, Jisu said that finances were not a concern anymore because she has worked and earned money for a living by herself, without her husband's support, for years. Children are not a concern, either, because her children are grown up. In addition, her deceased second child had encouraged her to get a divorce. Jisu's recent decision to live with her husband was based on her feeling of *Ansruum* for him, as discussed earlier.

For Hanna, finances were also not a main concern because she has worked for a living when her husband did not earn enough money to live off of. Her concern for her children, however, has affected her decision-making process. She once gave up her plan to get a divorce because of her child who was a high school senior. She told her husband to try harder to make their marriage work for the sake of their children. However, Hanna indicated that she is currently experiencing financial difficulties in the separation, and she has begun thinking that she might not remain separated if her husband is able to provide her with financial stability. She felt good about being separated, except for the financial aspect. She believes that her financial position will be better in two years because her older child will have a job and her younger child will graduate. She also mentioned that her younger child recently encouraged her to do what she wanted to do after the third incidence of her husband's adultery.

In sum, for Sevin, Mia, and Nami, the economics of divorce have been seriously considered at some period of their married lives while for Jina, Julie, Jisu, and Hanna, these have not been main concerns when considering divorce. In addition, concern for children are significant aspects of women's decision-making processes in terms of their marital relationships.

Religion, Beliefs, and Rituals

For Sevin, Jina, Julie, Jisu, Mia, and Nami, their religious beliefs or faith has carried them through their ordeals. For Jina, Julie, Jisu, Mia, and Nami, religious practices, such as prayer, meditation, singing hymns, or dancing, and their faith in Christianity were their ways of releasing stress and frustration from their marital relationships and undergird their hopes for their lives. For Sevin, Mia, and Nami, their religion and religious beliefs have strongly affected their decision-making processes in dealing with their marital conflicts.

Before Sevin came to know God, she fought with her husband, became indifferent to him, and became addicted to alcohol, cigarettes, and computer games. In doing these things, as mentioned earlier, she also felt empty and useless. She felt like she was losing or scattering her identity. Before believing in God, Sevin had also thought about divorce a lot, but she has not thought about it since she was dramatically changed by faith four years ago. Even though she was born a Christian, she had an experience of being reborn in God four years ago after hearing a sermon on YouTube. She shared,

One day, when I believed in God, I realized that I was nothing. If I don't depend on God, there is nothing I can achieve. There will be broken relationships and uselessness ... When I depend on God, I feel I am alive ... and I also become thankful that I eventually realized this because of this process.

She also stated, "God is the basis of my life, and if it weren't for God, my life would be collapsed and ruined." Sevin compared her experiences to the biblical stories of Jesus healing the sick; she said that she felt healed and safe when she applied this story to her situation. She hopes that she and her husband will come to the same place in faith. She believes that everything will be resolved if matters related to faith are settled. After she developed strong faith in God, she began actively attending church activities and was moved by the Bible and Hebrew classes she went to. She also shared that she participated in a dawn prayer service and fasted from breakfast for 40 days with two friends in faith in order to release her afflictions and find ways to deal with her marital difficulties.

Jina expressed that she was able to recuperate using prayer and meditation when dealing with marital conflicts. She did not have any negative impressions of religious teachings or sermons and did not think that religion or religious teachings simply encouraged women to endure no matter what. However, she had the impression that church programs are family oriented and often neglect the feelings of members of divorced families and isolate divorced people and their children. Jina also asserted that religion has not strongly affected her decision-making process in terms of divorce.

Before Julie was reborn in God, she did not want to hear people's advice to pray, and her faith in Christianity did not affect the way she dealt with her marital situation. She shared that she used to be a Sunday Christian; it was her habit to go to church, although she did not have any strong beliefs or convictions of salvation. However, after she became faithful four years ago, she realized that she was being disobedient, arrogant, and immature in thinking that she could manage everything in her life. She said that she now understands what people mean when they talk about the value of prayer. The

common aspect found in Jina and Julie is that they released their stress by having private time in meditation.

In Jisu's case, in dealing with marital conflicts and her husband's extramarital affairs, she prayed hard, forgave him in faith, and believed that he could be changed through God's love. She believes that her husband changed and began going to church because of her prayers. Jisu used to release her stress and find ways to cope with marital conflicts by prayer, fasting singing hymns, taking classes at religious institutions, and learning liturgical dance. However, after the death of her child due to cancer two years ago, her husband and she have felt frustrated and they began not attending church and instead work to make money on Sunday. Even though she does not go to church on Sunday due to her work, she said that she believes in God's love.

Hanna does not have a religious affiliation, while her husband grew up in a Catholic family. She indicated that she is not interested in religion, but she expressed that she is aware that religion has strongly affected human history. Hanna's ways of coping with her difficulties were continuously taking classes, such as leadership, debate, presentation, laugh therapy, computer licensing, and so on to change herself and also to become emotionally and financially independent from her husband.

Mia's main reason for living with her spouse has been her religious beliefs. Whenever she considered divorce, she also thought of religious messages and biblical teachings, such as, "I forgave you and saved you with my blood. How could you not forgive him?" She said that she has tried her best not to be ashamed before God when she encounters God. She also thought that her efforts to make her marriage work would be all for nothing and ruined if she gets divorced. She noted that it has helped her to think that

her husband is not normal, but is kind of mentally ill. When asked whether she was able to forgive her husband, she said, “I can live with him because I forgive him ... But, like scars, I have scars in my mind even though I have forgiven him.” Mia also shared that God and faith are the only things that have helped her to endure and overcome her difficulties and suffering. She stated, “If I pray to God, everything will be done ... if I don’t give up ...” For Mia, praying and participating in the worship service has been her ways of releasing her stress and agony.

Nami also indicated that religious practices, especially prayer, have been her way of releasing her stress and have changed her personality and life attitude. Before Nami became a Christian, she used to go to the Buddhist temple and visited a fortuneteller. After she was touched by prayer and God through Christianity, she became a faithful and enthusiastic Christian. She often stated that her marriage would have been better if she had believed in God earlier, since she would have used wisdom from Christian teachings and other Christians in coping with her marital issues. Like Mia, Nami stated that God has been the only thing she could rely on in her life. She also testified, “I gained freedom in God.”

It had been hard for me to fall asleep. But, whenever I went to church or early morning service, I was able to sleep and felt comfortable. I felt so good ... If I closed my eyes, I could see the cross. If I was trying to get to sleep, I sang a hymn ... My spirit was descending into it. I felt so good.

I did not understand why people remarried, because they would be re-bound in marriage. I was not able to understand how they felt because I had not experienced it in my life ... But, I know God’s love. . . . Some people have asked me how I can live by myself, but I do not think that I am living by myself. I live with God. I live with God instead of my husband. I am married to God. I am married to Jesus. I love God. I smile whenever I hear messages about God. I understand what it means to love ... I must not forgive [my husband] because I did not love and I did not trust [him].

In this chapter, I have presented the various reasons mentioned by research participants for remaining involved in their difficult marriages and have categorized them according to several themes: (1) Marriage and Divorce in Korean Society: Advice, Values, and Reputations; (2) Changes in Themselves and Their Husbands; (3) Compassion for Their Husbands (*ansreoum* and *bulsangham*); (4) Responsibility and Duty; (5) Economics of Divorce and Concern for Children; and (6) Religion, Beliefs, and Rituals. These themes will be reinterpreted and reorganized into different themes using an interdisciplinary analysis in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

THE INTERPRETIVE TASK: INTERDISCIPLINARY PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

In Chapter 3, I presented various reasons indicated by research participants for staying in abusive and conflictive relationships, and I categorized them into six themes: (1) Marriage and Divorce in Korean Society: Advice, Values, and Reputations; (2) Changes in Themselves and Their Husbands; (3) Compassion for Their Husbands (*ansreoum* and *bulsangham*); (4) Responsibility and Duty; (5) Economics of Divorce and Concern for Children; and (6) Religion, Beliefs, and Rituals. While these themes are based on the descriptions of research participants, they have been organized according to the themes discussed in the literature review. Acknowledging these themes, this chapter, which engages in the interpretive task of practical theology, aims to uncover the differences between theory and reality by applying appropriate theories or approaches to better understand women's experiences.¹ Therefore, in this chapter, these themes are reinterpreted and reorganized into different themes using an interdisciplinary approach. The interdisciplinary approach integrates relational-cultural theory (RCT), feminist and womanist practical/pastoral theology, Korean feminist perspectives, and systemic/contextual theory. Various elements presented in these approaches are explored in a holistic perspective, mainly based on Howard Clinebell's "model of Spirit-centered wholeness" and George Fitchett's "multidimensional model for spiritual assessment."² The interdisciplinary approach facilitates reflection not only on the interactions between the women's bodies, emotions, thoughts, and contexts, such as family, society, and

¹ Osmer, 80.

² Clinebell, 9; Fitchett, 16.

culture, but also aids exploration of their strengths, agency, coping strategies, resilience, courage, growth, vocations, and hope, aspects that, as I have previously argued, have been neglected and underestimated.

Standpoint as a Practical/Pastoral Theologian and Pastoral Counselor

Before I explain the interdisciplinary approach I use for the interpretive task in this chapter and the normative task in Chapter 5, I add here the self-reflexivity that is an essential element in practical theological method. I discuss my own position as a practical/pastoral theologian and pastoral counselor because my gender, social location, experiences, education, and training affect my perspectives on the topic and identify my limits and biases that need to be reflected on. I am a 40-year-old Korean female, the wife of an ordained Korean pastor in a Pentecostal denomination in Korea, and the mother of two sons, ages ten and eight. I attended a Presbyterian church in my hometown, Gwangju, for 24 years. Since I left my hometown and my country, I have had the opportunity to experience diverse churches, such as Methodist, Pentecostal, Episcopal, and nondenominational churches. In my journey to become a pastoral counselor, I have been educated at three seminaries—Yonsei University, Candler School of Theology, and Claremont School of Theology—that have affected my theology and identity as a pastoral counselor. I describe some of those effects below.

My experiences in Gwangju, Atlanta, and Claremont have influenced my identity formation and my theological perspectives on human beings, men and women, and their lives and sufferings. My particular interest in human suffering and oppression began with my experiences in my particular contexts, including my family and my hometown in South Korea. I was brought up in a family in which religio-cultural conflicts existed

between my Confucian father and his family and my Christian mother. My mother was unreasonably criticized by my father and his family whenever bad incidents happened, and she suffered from the restrictiveness of gender-biased roles and status in my father's extremely patriarchal and hierarchical family. In this family environment, I started to notice discrimination against women in Korea, while I also personally experienced several incidents of discrimination as a girl.³ As described in Chapter 1, my family background has given rise to my dissertation, and Korean women I met at churches and counseling centers have cultivated my ongoing interests in it.

My experiences as a citizen of Gwangju also led me to think about human suffering and regional discrimination in Korean society. When I was six, the Gwangju Democratization Movement against Chun Doo-Hwan's control of the government through a *coup d'état* was active, and the Gwangju massacre of May 18, 1980 took place.⁴ I still remember guns shooting from helicopters and having to cover our windows with thick blankets so nothing would be damaged by the gunshots from outside. Since that time, people in Gwangju, as well as the Jeolla region of southwestern Korea, have suffered from economic and political discrimination.⁵ After I came to Atlanta in 2001, I

³ One of the experiences I had was when I received admission to a university to which I had applied. When I visited my uncle's house with my parents, my uncle told my father not to send me to school because women with higher educations will create problems in their families. He told my parents that it would be better for me to get married before I had more experience outside my community.

⁴ The Gwangju Democratization Movement or Gwangju massacre refers to the uprising in the city of Gwangju or Kwangju, South Korea from May 18-27, 1980 against the new military leader, General Chun Doo-Hwan, who took control of the unstable government through a *coup d'état* on Dec. 12, 1979. This movement has become "a symbol of South Koreans' struggle against authoritarian regimes and their fight for democracy." While there has been no accurate death toll, foreign press sources and critics of Chun's administration have insisted that "the actual death toll was in the 1,000 to 2,000 range." During Chun's regime, his government named this incident as a rebellion against the government. After 17 years of fights to "restore honor to victims," in 1997, May 18th became "an official memorial day" in South Korea. For reference to pertinent sources, and the source of the quotations, see "Gwangju Democratization Movement," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gwangju_massacre (accessed March 4, 2013).

⁵ "Gwangju Democratization Movement," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gwangju_massacre.

had to confront and deal with racial discrimination. As well as experiencing the tension between whites and blacks, as an Asian woman, I personally experienced discrimination from whites and blacks in classrooms, bookstores, grocery stores, libraries, the DMV, and so on.⁶ Thus, my experiences in my family of origin, my hometown of Gwangju, and Atlanta, Georgia have led me to think about conflicts and discrimination between racial groups and human suffering in relation to social injustice and oppression.

In addition, my experience of having been diagnosed with thyroid cancer in 2011 led me to pay attention to different levels of human suffering. Having surgery to treat my thyroid and lymph nodes right under my left ear (since the cancer had spread to that area), having radiation treatment in an isolated room for three days, and staying in another isolated room for three weeks so as not to expose others to radiation caused me to have various feelings and to revisit the meaning of my life, suffering, and my relationships with God, family, and friends. In my efforts not only to understand my own experiences of suffering and others' suffering, but also to explore my own and others' ways of dealing with suffering in order to survive, cope, overcome, and heal, I found I had gained helpful theological and theoretical approaches from my education and training. Specifically, my experiences, education, and training have led me to affirm a feminist practical/pastoral theology and a theology of compassion as my theological ground in understanding human suffering and ways of dealing with suffering. In addition, I use systemic/ contextual approaches and relational-cultural therapy (RCT) to understand individuals, conceptualize individuals' issues and situations, and provide appropriate help

⁶ For many, the most striking incident was the time where the Iraq War was about to begin. One day after a protest by international students against the Iraq War, a banner was put on the wall of the main library at Emory. Of the messages on it, what I remember is, "You don't have a right to say what the U.S. has to do . . . Koreans! Remember what we did for your country!"

for individuals seeking assistance in counseling settings. In this chapter and the next, in order to construct holistic understanding of the topic and the perspectives presented by my interviewees, I will engage and interrelate various elements presented in RCT, systemic/contextual approaches, feminist practical/pastoral theology, Korean feminist perspectives, Howard Clinebell's model of Spirit-centered wholeness, and George Fitchett's 7x7 model.

In other words, I take a position of integration as practical/pastoral theologian and pastoral counselor.⁷ I am aware of the debates on the relationships between theology/religion and psychology/sciences or between different theoretical/therapeutic perspectives. As Loren Townsend has observed, some people see them as independent, some find an inevitable conflict between them, some seek a dialogue between them, and some advocate their integration.⁸ Since each area has an independent history of development, I think it is possible and requisite to address conflicts by bringing them into dialogue with one another and integrating various sources. However, I also think that they are directly and indirectly related to each other and have to be integrated in order to understand human beings as holistic beings, using all potential resources to help people in need. I take an integration position because, as Osmer argues, "no one perspective captures the fullness of truth and . . . , often, many perspectives are needed to understand complex, multidimensional phenomena," and "we must learn to live with uncertainty: the

⁷ Townsend, Carroll Wise, Howard Clinebell, Archie Smith, Jr., Edward Wimberly, Larry Graham, Bonnie Miller-McLemore, Kames Ashbrook, Nancy Ramsay, Pamela Cooper-White, and Christie Cozad Neuger are pastoral theologians or pastoral counselors who have worked on the integration approach. Loren Townsend, *Introduction to Pastoral Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009), 88-89.

⁸ Townsend, 79-92.

more we know, the more we realize how little we know. We must also learn to live with the tension between different perspectives, including those of theology.”⁹

Interdisciplinary Practical Theological Reflection

According to Pamela Cooper-White, a feminist pastoral theologian, many times people suffer because they are not able to speak about their feelings and thoughts to someone or they do not feel that they are deeply heard by anyone.¹⁰ Giving “voice to the voiceless” is the starting point and an essential element in working with women who have been marginalized.¹¹ The misunderstandings concerning women who remain in abusive relationships may have caused women to not only be disconnected from their own experiences through being silenced or not heard, but may have also caused them to be disconnected from people who can help them not to be blamed and criticized. According to RCT, a primary source of human suffering is disconnection, which results in “paralyzing psychological isolation and impaired relational functioning.”¹² Therefore, the interpretative work in this dissertation is done in order to hear the lived experiences of Korean women who remain in conflictive and abusive relationships and also to explore their experiences of disconnection on various levels, including interpersonal, familial, and institutional-cultural levels.¹³ In addition, other significant values, such as relational resilience, as described in RCT, will be explored.

⁹ Osmer, 83-84.

¹⁰ Cooper-White, 13.

¹¹ Cooper-White, 13.

¹² Maureen Walker and Wendy B. Rosen, eds. *How Connections Heal: Stories from Relational Cultural Therapy* (New York: Guilford Press, 2004), 6. Jean Baker Miller initiated the development of RCT in *Toward a New Psychology of Women* (1976), and Irene Stiver, Judith Jordan, and Janet Surrey have worked together to articulate the perspectives of RCT, which has previously been known as the Stone Center Theory and Self-in-Relation Theory. Jordan, *Relational-Cultural Therapy*, 10.

¹³ Walker and Rosen, 6-7.

Systemic/contextual approaches share similar ideas with RCT in that individuals are understood by reflecting not only on variables such as age, employment, and education, but also on the various systems or contexts surrounding individuals.¹⁴ In particular, as indicated earlier, Urie Bronfenbrenner's designation of four systems—microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem—helps one to comprehend the “ecological environments” that surround Korean women.¹⁵ Among the many variables discussed in systemic/contextual approaches, feminist approaches and feminist pastoral theology have drawn the most attention to issues of gender and power.¹⁶ Regarding gender issues, feminist approaches emphasize examining the “historical traditions of the patriarchal family, contemporary constructions of masculinity and femininity, and structural constraints” in order to understand women in their contexts.¹⁷ The RCT approach, based on a feminist perspective, also argues that comprehending not only “the culture and its distortions,” but also power dynamics in human interactions is fundamental to understanding an individual “who lives within or on the periphery of that culture.”¹⁸ Acknowledging power imbalances and oppression and understanding the consequences, such as “division, anger, disempowerment, depression, shame and disconnection,” are considered to be important in order to conceptualize individuals’

¹⁴ Theories discussing the relationships between individuals and their cultures or contexts have been named systemic models, contextual models, or ecological models, and according to Cigdem Jagitcibasi, these names can be used interchangeably “as long as they focus on both the person and the environment in their reciprocal interaction and as long as they extend the environment beyond the immediate (family) surroundings to encompass the larger socio-cultural-historical context.” Therefore, I understand these models as having similar approaches, but they are named differently based on scholars’ preferences. Cigdem Kagitcibasi, “Family and Socialization in Cross-Cultural Perspective: A Model of Change,” in *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation 1989: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Richard A. Dienstbier and John J. Berman (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 142-43.

¹⁵ Bronfenbrenner, 22, 25.

¹⁶ Kristin L. Anderson, “Gender, Status, and Domestic Violence,” 655.

¹⁷ Michael P. Johnson, 284.

¹⁸ Jordan, *Relational-Cultural Therapy*, 6, 94.

issues and situations.¹⁹ While systemic/contextual approaches consider the issues of gender and power as only two variables in “a complex constellation of causes” of problems, I would like to pay more attention to these issues, using RCT and feminist pastoral theology, in seeking to understand Korean women who remain in conflictive and abusive relationships, because their social and cultural contexts strongly affect their lives and decision-making processes.²⁰

In addition, as a pastoral counselor, I will consider “faith lived in context,” as advocated by feminist practical theologian Riet Bons-Storm.²¹ Though secular human sciences (including psychology and developmental theories) and feminist approaches tend to pay little attention to aspects of faith, religion, or spirituality, it is essential for a pastoral counselor to be aware of and appreciate the faith traditions, theological perspectives, and religious/spiritual beliefs and practices that individuals have. Specifically, as suggested by Bons-Storm, I will take into consideration three aspects: their faith tradition, the contexts that have affected their lives, beliefs, and decision-making processes, and “the touch of the Holy Spirit, the Divine-inaction-and-communication.”²² In other words, I look into how each Korean woman defines God, the divine, or the Spirit and how they apply and practice their religious/spiritual beliefs in their lives in accordance with their personal contexts. Each Korean woman is understood as “a theological agent” who has the right to articulate her own theological beliefs.²⁵ In terms of the theological differences between the researcher and the research participants that could be present in the interview process, I have sought to respect their opinions and

¹⁹ Jordan, 6.

²⁰ Kristin L. Anderson, 655.

²¹ Bons-Storm, 18-19.

²² Bons-Storm, 14.

beliefs, examine what has affected their beliefs, and provide opportunities for the participants to reflect on their own beliefs. While systemic approaches consider religious and spiritual aspects as one system among various systems that can affect women, I observe that religious and spiritual aspects are immanent in all realms of individuals' lives, and a holistic understanding of human beings or an understanding of "the living human web" could not be achieved without contemplating these religious and spiritual aspects.²³

Various elements presented in RCT, systemic/contextual approaches, feminist practical/pastoral theology, and Korean feminist perspectives will be explored in a holistic perspective that integrates various aspects. The holistic perspective can be partially explained by the "model of Spirit-centered Wholeness" introduced and expanded as the model of "Spirit-Centered Well Being" by Howard Clinebell.²⁴ Clinebell presented "six interdependent dimensions of human wholeness—physical, psychological, interpersonal, institutional, ecological, and spirit" and articulated the spirit as "the central, integrating" dimension.²⁵ As shown in Figure 6, The Flower of Wholeness, the sixth dimension, Spirit is considered "the wholeness of our spiritual lives" and "the unifying center of the other dimensions."²⁶

As a practical/pastoral theologian and pastoral counselor, I am in agreement with the theological literature that argues the immanence of the spiritual in all realms.

²³ Osmer, 15-16. The concept of the living human web has been proposed by Bonnie Miller McLemore in her discussions of the interconnectedness and reciprocal relationship between individuals and their familial, social, and cultural contexts, along with religious aspects. See, for example, her article, "The Human Web: Reflections on the State of Pastoral Theology," *Christian Century*, April 7 (1993): 366-69.

²⁴ Howard Clinebell expanded his holistic perspective from the six dimensions to seven dimensions (mind, body, spirit, love, work, play, and the world) in his book, *Well Being: A Personal Plan for Exploring and Enriching the Seven Dimensions of Life* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1992)

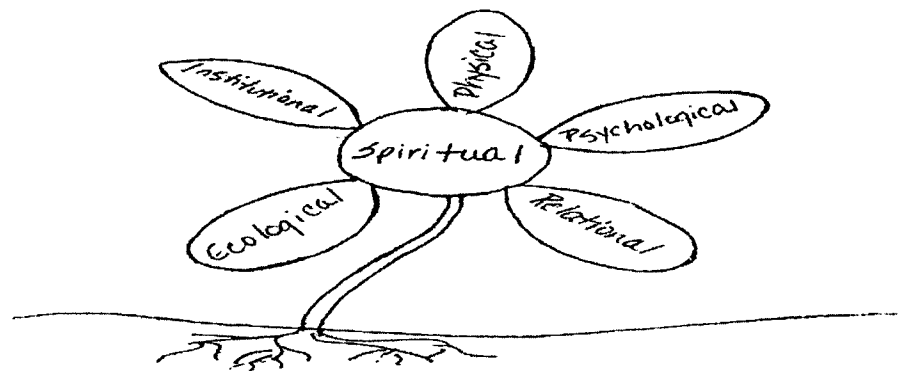
²⁵ Clinebell, "Six Dimensions of Wholeness Centered in Spirit," 9.

²⁶ Clinebell, 19.

Clinebell, for example, argues that spiritual aspects are immanent in all realms of individuals' lives.

The degree of our spiritual wholeness is determined by the quality of our values and meanings, our philosophies of life and belief systems, our moments of self-transcendence, and, ultimately, the quality of our relationship with Spirit, the source of all healing and wholeness. Enlivening our relationship with God, the values which guide our choices and determine our life-style, and the meanings which give our lives purpose—all these have profound influences on the wholeness of the other five dimensions.²⁷

Figure 6. The Flower of Wholeness²⁸



Based on Clinebell's argument, in order to understand research participants in a holistic manner, it is important to assess their stories by reflecting on various aspects, such as their values, beliefs, life philosophies, and relationships with the Spirit. In addition, "It is important to recognize that an individual's potentialities for healing and wholeness are within that person's total situation," which can be understood as resources for resilience.²⁹

The holistic perspective is also deepened by George Fitchett's "multidimensional model for spiritual assessment" that reflects not only on medical, psychological, family system, and social-cultural dimensions, but also on the spiritual dimension as "the

²⁷ Clinebell, "Six Dimensions of Wholeness Centered in Spirit," 19.

²⁸ Clinebell, 21.

²⁹ Clinebell, 20.

dimension of life that reflects the need to find meaning in existence and in which we respond to the sacred.”³⁰ In other words, Fitchett’s model, also referred to as the 7x7 model, includes two major subdivisions, holistic dimensions and spiritual dimensions, as shown in Table 1.³¹ Even though Fitchett does not distinguish the term *spiritual* from similar terms, such as *spirit*, *spirituality*, and *religion*, I will discuss the differences between the latter three terms in Chapter 5.³²

Table 1. The 7x7 Model for Spiritual Assessment³³

Medical Dimension	Beliefs and Meaning
Psychological Dimension	Vocation and Consequences
Psychosocial Dimension	Experience and Emotion
Family System Dimension	Courage and Growth
Ethnic and Cultural Dimension	Ritual and Practice
Societal Issues Dimension	Community
Spiritual Dimension	Authority and Guidance

While the holistic dimensions are similar to the dimensions of Clinebell’s model, Fitchett’s spiritual dimensions specifically articulate several elements that need to be assessed, as shown in Table 1 above. Several elements in the spiritual dimensions subdivision are influenced by Paul Pruyser’s pastoral diagnosis model that suggests assessing awareness of the Holy, providence, faith, grace or gratefulness, communion, and sense of vocation.³⁴ Pruyser advocates utilizing these theological and spiritual

³⁰ Fitchett, 16. According to Fitchett, pastoral counselors have a tendency to not use the word *diagnosis*, since it has a medical connotation, rather, based on the influence of Paul Pruyser and Don Browning, pastoral counselors have felt it necessary to use the term, *spiritual assessment*. In using *spiritual assessment*, Fitchett does not differentiate the term *spiritual* from “spirituality, religion, religiosity, pastoral, faith, or belief,” because “the distinctions are not important” for him. In addition, Fitchett does not differentiate *assessment* from *diagnosis* because these terms are “both a statement of a perception and a process of information gathering and interpretation.” Fitchett, 15-17. As a pastoral theologian, I prefer to use the terms *assessment*, *conceptualization*, or *understanding* rather than *diagnosis* in order to avoid the tendency to label and pathologize individuals through a diagnosis.

³¹ Fitchett, 42.

³² Fitchett, 16.

³³ Fitchett, 42.

³⁴ Paul W. Pruyser, *The Minister as Diagnostician* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976) 60-79.

resources, which have been underused not only in the field of psychology and by mental health professionals, but also in the field of pastoral care and ministry. Under the influence of Pruyser's model, Fitchett introduced his 7x7 model with the intention to provide "a complete assessment that encompasses all bio-psycho-social-spiritual factors relevant to well being."³⁵ The holistic dimensions from Fitchett's 7x7 model that I use in this chapter allow me to conceptualize Korean women's situations in conflictive and abusive relationships by reflecting on the interactions between their bodies, emotions, thoughts, and the contexts surrounding them, including family, society, and culture. The spiritual dimensions help not only explore their strengths, agency, coping strategies, resilience, courage, growth, and vocation that have been neglected and underestimated, but also to understand Korean women's spiritual needs and resources in relation to the holistic dimensions.

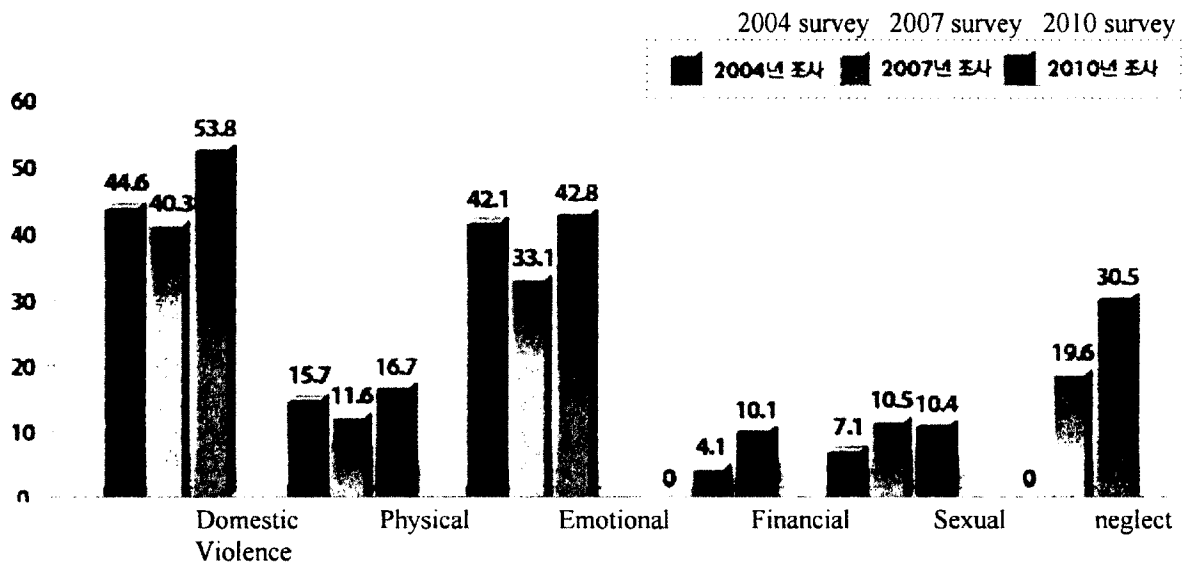
Holistic Dimensions: Implicit Reality and Multiple Layers of Systems

As indicated earlier, the 2013 survey of 5000 families (49.5% male, 50.5% female) by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (여성가족부) in Korea reported that 45.5% of the people surveyed have experienced abuse or violence in their marital relationships. The Ministry's surveys, done every three years since 2003, do not show major changes in the prevalence of domestic violence, as shown in Table 2 on the next page; about half of Korean families have reported experiencing marital abuse or violence. In spite of the prevalence of marital conflicts, abuse, and violence in Korean families,

³⁵ David Hodge, *Spiritual Assessment: Handbook for Helping Professionals* (Botsford, CT: North American Association of Christians in Social Work, 2003), 17.

while preparing my research and recruiting volunteers, I often confronted biases and inaccurate preconceptions, mainly from male Koreans.

Table 2. The Prevalence of Domestic Violence³⁶



The prevalence of domestic violence for married couples under 65 (2004, 2007, 2010)
 Since the 2004 survey, financial violence and neglect have been included.

The first incident happened in a classroom at Claremont School of Theology when I introduced my interest in exploring women's lives in conflictive and abusive relationships. After presenting my interest in this issue, one of the male Korean students questioned whether the topic was relevant for younger generations in Korea, since Korean women now have much more power and equality in marital relationships, and their lives and roles have changed as a result of feminist influences. Hearing his comments, I felt frustrated because what he said revealed not only ignorance of marital conflicts and difficulties, but also male prejudices and assumptions in terms of marital

³⁶ Republic of Korea, Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, “가정폭력 실태조사”[The Prevalence of domestic violence], http://www.mogef.go.kr/korea/view/policyGuide/policyGuide03_01_01c.jsp?viewfnc1=0&viewfnc2=0&viewfnc3=1&viewfnc4=1&viewfnc5=0&viewfnc6=0 (accessed May 20, 2014). The copy of result was also provided by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family.

situations in present-day Korea. In addition, I was concerned that perspectives like this might cause women in conflictive and abusive relationships to be silent by imposing the idea that women in contemporary Korean society live in better conditions than women in previous generations.

I encountered another type of male bias and misguided assumption when I contacted churches in order to recruit volunteers. When I asked whether I could explain the purpose of my research and recruit volunteers, I received messages from several churches stating that their senior pastors refused to let me do this because "marital conflicts" and "domestic violence" are issues too sensitive to discuss. Even though pastors and ministers I contacted were aware of and admitted the reality that there have been church members who have struggled in their conflictive and abusive marital relationships, their senior pastors did not want to discuss the issues related to marital conflicts and domestic violence in their parishes. When I experienced hesitation and rejection from churches, I felt like I was confronting more biases and assumptions that exist in churches in relation to dealing with marital conflicts and domestic violence. With this repeated rejection, a particular word came to my mind: *secret*. Bringing up and discussing the issues related to marital conflicts and domestic violence seem to be taboo; these are things to keep secret. Thus, domestic violence and conflict have been an "implicit reality." In this section, the implicit reality women confront is reflected on in terms of the holistic dimensions. The themes presented in Chapter 3 are reorganized into new themes by reinterpreting the stories of research participants in the holistic dimensions.

Family, Friends, and Churches as Resources with Limitations

Based on systemic approaches, particularly Bronfenbrenner's, family, friends, and churches are categorized as meso-systems that research participants have been surrounded and influenced by. These systems or contexts have an effect by not only contributing to but also helping resolve marital conflicts. As discussed in Chapter 3, especially in the section, Marriage and Divorce in Korean Society: Advice, Values, and Reputations, in the interviews, research participants presented that family, friends, and churches have played certain roles and have influenced their lives and decision-making processes. For some, family, friends, and churches have been resources and foundations for resiliency, while for others, these were considered to have had limiting and negative influences on their lives.

In terms of family, Sevin, Jina, and Julie shared their hesitation to talk to their parents. Sevin did not want her mother to know about her marital difficulties because she had gotten married in spite of her mother's opposition. She may have felt shame and fear when wondering whether her mother would criticize her for marrying a man whom she was against. Jina and Julie hesitated because of feelings of guilt and shame, respectively, and because of the suffering and distress their parents might experience if they knew about their difficulties. In addition, one of the reasons these three had qualms about getting divorced was concern for the reputations of their families, as described in Chapter 2. In particular, Sevin and Jina pointed to the fact that there was no one in their families who had gotten divorced as affecting their decision-making processes. Jina mentioned that she did not want to feel left alone or a sense of alienation and to be the odd one as a result of being divorced. Based on these women's feelings and familial experiences,

family could be considered as not helpful, in that they were not able to ask their families for help or their familial concerns prevented them from getting divorced.

However, this does not mean that they have not been influenced by or have not asked for help from their parents. In spite of their hesitancy, they asked their parents for assistance at decisive moments, and advice from family members, especially parents, have affected research participants' lives and their decision-making processes. Julie's mother encouraged her to give her husband a second chance, and Jisu's family members also encouraged her to move to her husband's place in order to solve relational and financial problems. In the case of Hanna, her mother gave her the advice to be responsible for her own choices, her husband, and her children, while Jina and Jisu heard similar exhortations from their parents to take responsibility and make decisions after living with their spouses as long as they could. Even though Hanna's mother used to be a Buddhist, her mother's advice sounded similar to the advice of some research participants' Christian parents. The descriptions of research participants reveal that the counsel their parents and family members have offered have affected their perspectives and decision-making processes, and they have often felt grateful for their parents' advice in spite of their reluctance to ask for help. In this sense, it could be said that families were helpful resources for them in dealing with marital difficulties.

Friends likewise played ambiguous roles for research participants in that they were helpful resources and support systems that increased their resilience, but within limitations. All of the research participants except Nami shared their stories with their friends and felt relief or a releasing of stress in the sharing itself. For Jina and Hanna, their friends' advice strongly affected their thoughts and decision-making processes, as

discussed in Chapter 3. While they felt relief in telling their stories to their friends and took into consideration their suggestions, they also indicated negative aspects of sharing their stories with their friends. Sevin and Julie said that they found no solutions through relaying their stories, even though they felt understood and built companionship by sharing similar marital conflicts with their friends. Julie conveyed her experience of being betrayed by a close friend who broke confidentiality and talked about Julie's marital issues with others. After feeling betrayed by friends or feeling frustrated by the responses of friends and neighbors, Julie and Mia stated that they became careful about talking about their marital issues with others. While their friends' presence was helpful for them, sharing their difficulties sometimes brought other challenges into their lives.

Pastors, church members, and people in the Christian faith also played various roles for research participants. In the case of Sevin, continuous attention from a church's small group members has affected her life. Even though she did not have a strong and personal belief in God, she occasionally attended churches and participated in small group meetings. Sevin sometimes shared her marital difficulties in small group meetings and group members gave her advice in dealing with her marital conflicts. These members also encouraged her to find good hymns and upload them to her Facebook account so that she and her husband could listen to them together. This suggestion led her to look for sermons on YouTube and eventually find God four years ago. Even though church members did not have close relationships with Sevin, she indicated that she has received continuous attention from them for years, and this provided opportunities for Sevin to change her personal and religious life. In addition, Jina, Julie, Jisu, Mia, and Nami

indicated that they have received support from pastors, church members, and people in faith, even though the advice given some of them has not been helpful.

While some of the research participants indicated that pastors, church members, and people in faith have helped them by supporting them or giving advice, some of the participants presented their concerns about churches in dealing with marital issues and divorce. Jina indicated that churches as religious institutions have been silent regarding marital conflicts and divorce. Julie mentioned that the counsel to pray in order to deal with difficulties sometimes was not helpful to her before she became a faithful Christian. After she came to know God, she said that she was able to understand why pastors and people of faith advised her to pray, but she also indicated that it is important to listen to people's stories when they seek assistance and to pray for them, rather than simply giving them advice and telling them to pray.

Variables Observed

In reflecting on the influences of family, friends, and churches as communities, various aspects are observed. The first observation is that research participants experienced a lack of advice, instruction, or communication regarding marriage from or with their parents before marriage and after marriage. Julie, Jisu, and Hanna noted they would like to have received counsel from their parents regarding marital relationships, whether before or after they got married. They said they would have had better lives or marital relationships if they had been given some guidance or had a chance to talk with their parents about what it means to be married. A second observation is that there is no indication that parents or family members reached out to the spouses of the research participants, except Nami, in order to give them instruction or suggestions to help their

relationships. This refers to the reality that women are often the ones who seek help and the ones who strive to solve problems in conflictive and abusive marital relationships.

My third observation is that advice from family members varies depending on gender and depending on whether the giver is from the family of origin or the spouse's family. Research participants often asked for help from their mothers and implemented their suggestions in their decision-making processes. In the cases of Jisu and Hanna, they did not take into consideration their fathers' advice in dealing with their marital difficulties because they considered their fathers to be abusive, unfaithful, and irresponsible husbands to their mothers, just like their husbands. Their husband's family members also encouraged them to forgive their husbands because being unfaithful is something all men do and it is acceptable behavior. Women's suffering was undermined and increased by their husbands' families.

In terms of the influences of churches, my first observation is that there are no exceptions for Christians in terms of marital conflicts, abuse, or violence. It would be easy to think that religious people or Christians are less likely to experience marital conflicts or domestic violence. However, research by Kristen Curtis and Christopher Ellison has indicated that "religious dissolution" can cause marital conflicts, and research by Ellison, Bartkowski, and Anderson and by Lambert and Dollahite have found that "religious dissimilarity" is associated with "authoritarianism" and domestic violence.³⁷ These research studies reveal that Christians can experience marital conflicts or domestic

³⁷ Kristen T. Curtis and Christopher Ellison, "Religious Heterogamy and Marital Conflict," *Journal of Family Issues* 23 (2002): 551-76; Christopher G. Ellison, John P. Bartkowski, and Kristin L. Anderson, "Are There Religious Variations in Domestic Violence?," *Journal of Family Issues* 20 (1999): 87-113; Nathaniel M. Lambert and David C. Dollahite, "How Religiosity Helps Couples Prevent, Resolve, and Overcome Marital Conflict," *Family Relations* 55 (2006): 440.

violence due to as well as despite their religious beliefs. Whether couples have the same or different religious beliefs, as noted by Harway and Hansen, “belonging to a certain religious group does not protect a woman from being battered or prevent a man from battering.”³⁸

My second observation is that it does not hold true for my research participants that “churches still most often fail to assist the victim of abuse and, in many cases, worsen the problem by blaming the victim,” as stated by Gaddis.³⁹ As presented in the literature review, for some research participants, their reasons for remaining in their marriages are related to their beliefs and the teachings of their religious groups. They have been encouraged to be patient and to pray in dealing with their marital challenges and to forgive and love their husbands. However, none of my participants indicated that they were encouraged to repent or were criticized for not being good-enough wives or Christians due to having marital conflicts.

In addition, it would be inaccurate to say that churches are prohibiting divorce, because research participants indicated that there are members of their congregations who have gotten divorced, and some churches provided small group meetings for people who are divorced. Even though it would be different depending on denomination, among my research participants none said they had heard messages regarding domestic violence or divorce. Nevertheless, Sevin, Jina, Mia, and Nami indicated that they anticipated feeling guilty if they were to get divorced, and they feared becoming isolated or alienated from their Christian families or faith communities as a result of divorce. In the cases of Mia and Nami, they thought it would be better for them to live as steadfast wives instead of

³⁸ Harway and Hansen, 26.

³⁹ Gaddis, xii.

being disgraced and shamed as divorced women. Their responses may imply the traditional understandings of churches on divorce or the experience of divorced women in church life.

Therefore, based on the descriptions of research participants and my experiences in recruiting volunteers, I draw the conclusion that pastors and church leaders tend to merely tolerate or avoid discussing marital conflicts, domestic abuse or violence, and divorce.⁴⁰ As mentioned previously, marital conflicts, abuse, violence, and divorce seem to be the implicit reality. As a result, instead of seeking help at the institutional level, I found that women often seek assistance and share their coping strategies on individual levels, which will be discussed more in a later section of this chapter, *Becoming Agents as Resources*.

The studies about coping strategies and resilience have drawn attention to family, friends, and communities as sources of comfort, advice, or help in times of difficulty, crisis, or trauma.⁴¹ In addition, having shared belief systems in a family and receiving support from religious leaders and communities are thought to be protective factors that contribute to individual and family resilience in dealing with family crises. However, research participants' descriptions reveal the ambiguous roles, positive and negative, of family, friends, and communities in their lives and decision-making processes. In other words, family, friends, and churches have been resources for research participants, even though they have also sometimes been unhelpful.

Still Patriarchal and Gender-Biased

In the literature review, one of the reasons women continued living with their

⁴⁰ Gaddis, 8-9.

⁴¹ The terms were defined in Chapter 2.

husbands in conflictive and abusive relationships was their feelings of fear, shame, and guilt. These feelings were also found to be present for research participants as they described their reasons for staying, as discussed in Chapter 3. For Sevin, Jina, Jisu, Hanna, Mia, and Nami, their feelings were related to fears of certain changes after divorce or fears of losing close relationships with children or family members. Julie, Mia, and Nami mentioned that they felt shame for not having a good marriage. Sevin, Jina, Mia, and Nami indicated that they wanted to prevent their parents, children, or Christian family from experiencing shame or being dishonored. As presented in the literature review, for research participants, shame is considered the main psychological reason for not getting divorced or not reaching out for help in spite of their suffering. While shame could be understood as part of the psychological dimension, since the concern about shame is not only personal, but also a concern for one's parents, children, and other family members, in the Korean context, shame is also integrally related to social, religious, and cultural dimensions.

The issues related to shame, dishonor, reputation, and discrimination are often analyzed or reflected in the patriarchal systems of the Korean family, church, and society. Even though the Korean family and society have been changed by the influences of Western culture and feminist perspectives, the Korean patriarchal tradition and gender-biased roles, based on Confucian teachings, still undergird Korean minds and lifestyles and obviously affect Korean women's understandings of their roles and lives. As examples, Sevin, Jina, Julie, Jisu, Hanna, Mia, and Nami presented their husbands' expectations for them to play the roles expected of them in traditional patriarchy and hierarchy. In the cases of Sevin and Jina, their husbands wanted them to be subordinate

wives; Julie's husbands did not want her to talk to other men; Jisu's and Hanna's husbands considered themselves superior to them; and Mia and Nami presented that they have lived in a traditional hierarchical family and society.

The Korean patriarchal tradition was predominantly developed under the influence of Confucianism, which was adopted as the ruling principle to maintain social stability during the Choson or Yi Dynasty (1392-1910).⁴² Confucianism emphasizes the family as the basic social unit and values its establishment and maintenance. For the purpose of maintaining order in family and society, Confucian gender roles/expectations and status are clearly defined and taught to men and women in Korea. For example, the Confucian principles, *samjong chidok* (삼종지덕, 三從之德, meaning “obedience to father; obedience to husband, and obedience to son”) and *namjon yobi* (남존여비, 男尊女卑, meaning “men should be respected; women should be lowered”), demonstrate the Confucian belief in hierarchy and gender-based discrimination against women.⁴³ Since this hierarchy is seen as indispensable to maintaining families and social order, Korean women have tended to play their roles faithfully, and *hyonmo yangcho* (현모양처, 賢母良妻, meaning “wise mother, good wife”) becomes the motto for women's role performance in Korea.⁴⁴

The attitudes my research participants encountered regarding men's infidelity are also rooted in the traditional patriarchal and hierarchal perspectives and gender-biased understandings based on Korean patriarchal tradition and Confucianism. As mentioned

⁴² An, 35.

⁴³ Ai Ra Kim, 6-7.

⁴⁴ Ai Ra Kim, 6.

before, even though infidelity and adultery are not categorized as abuse, this issue has been a significant factor in causing not only marital conflicts and fights, but also emotional and physical abuse and violence. In addition, familial and societal responses to men's adultery have often amplified women's afflictions. In Korean society, a husband's extramarital relationships have tend to be overlooked, since it has been considered an expression of manliness, while a wife's extramarital relationship has been unthinkable.⁴⁵ In addition, a wife's jealousy about her husband's extramarital affairs has also been taboo, based on the Confucian teaching, *chilgo chiak* (칠거지악, 七去之惡), meaning the seven evils that deserve women's repudiation.⁴⁶ As shown in the descriptions by research participants, their husbands' extramarital relationships have been excused and considered to be forgivable by family and society in the Korean context. Therefore, women's sufferings in dealing with their husbands' extramarital relationships have been neglected or minimized.⁴⁷

For Korean Christians, understandings about women's roles have not differed from those of Confucianism. Some Korean churches still exclude women from leadership and positions of religious authority and use biblical texts to teach women's subordination (Ephesians 5:24), obedience (1 Cor. 14:33-35), and submission (Lev. 8, 9, 12:1-5, 15, 18, 21; Ephesians 5:22) to men.⁴⁸ In a sense, there has been a confluence of conservative literal readings of the Bible and Korean patriarchal Confucian practices, which has been a detrimental combination to many Korean women. In spite of continuous efforts

⁴⁵ Seung Ai Yang, 261.

⁴⁶ Jung Ha Kim, *Bridge-Makers and Cross-Bearers*, 10. The seven offenses are not bearing a son, disobeying a parent-in-law, adultery, jealousy, theft, chronic illness, and talkativeness.

⁴⁷ Jung Ha Kim, 7.

⁴⁸ Jung Ha Kim, "Labor of Compassion," 206.

advocating for women's participation in church leadership, this tendency toward sexism is still prevalent.⁴⁹ In dealing with suffering, in Christianity, the sacrificial love of women has been elevated, based on the idea of the sacrifice of Jesus and its redemptive suffering. Chulwoo Sohn indicates that Christian teachings and theology have advocated "the male dominance which leads to domestic violence" and have encouraged Korean women to sacrifice themselves for the sake of maintaining their families.⁵⁰ Jung Ha Kim argues that the Korean church provides religious explanations for its sexism by "juxtaposing patriarchal readings" of the Christian gospel and justifies the pain experienced and endured in the lives of women by "beautifying and abstracting women's sufferings as the highest form of human love and Christian calling."⁵¹

As a result, some feminists, Christian and non-Christian, argue that the issues of gender and power are to be "the ultimate root of intimate violence" and criticize religious traditions, the patriarchal structures of churches, and teachings on gender-based roles, especially "the so-called headship" of men, in that these have negatively affected women's lives and their decision-making processes in conflictive and abusive relationships.⁵² Living in multiple layers of systems having patriarchal and hierarchal structures—families, churches, societies, and culture—my research participants, as Korean women, have been taught and disciplined to value marriage itself and feel

⁴⁹ For example, in 2012, Korean Church Women United (한국교회여성연합회) made a public statement regarding the imbalance of women's participation in leadership and gender-biased roles and discrimination against women in patriarchal Korean churches. Korean Church Women United, "한국교회여성 연합회 성명서: 2012 한국교회의 개혁과 성숙을 위한 교회 여성 제안"[A Statement by the Korean Church Women United: Suggestions for the Korean Church's Reformation and Maturation], <http://www.dandangnews.com/news/articleview.html?idxno=19885> (accessed May 15, 2014).

⁵⁰ Chulwoo Sohn, 221-22.

⁵¹ Jung Ha Kim, "Labor of Compassion," 208.

⁵² Kristin L. Anderson, 655; Browning et al., 131.

responsible for maintaining their marriages by playing the traditional roles of women. Therefore, feelings of fear, shame, and guilt need to be understood in relationship to the meso-, exo-, and macro-systems by which research participants are surrounded, rather than merely psychologically interpreted.

In addition, my interviewees anticipate experiencing the social stigmas, due to meso-, exo-, and macro-systemic dimensions that are inflicted on women who have been in abusive relationships as well as divorced women, single mothers, and/or remarried women. Research participants indicated their awareness of the difficulties of and discrimination against divorced women, whether they remarried or not. Jisu, Hanna, and Mia presented their cognizance of the emotional, relational, and financial difficulties of divorced and remarried women. Even though Hanna, a non-Christian, made a decision to live separately from her husband, she was also concerned about her life after divorce, remembering the experiences of divorced people and the social discrimination against divorced women and their children. Therefore, women's lives are affected by multiple layers of shame and discrimination imposed upon them in Korean society and culture.

Private Family

While feminist approaches consider the issues of gender and power to be “the ultimate root[s] of intimate violence,” systemic approaches try to examine the many variables that can affect marital conflicts, such as age, cohabitation status, employment, education, socioeconomic status, social structures, and culture.⁵³ As discussed in the section “Finances and Children” in Chapter 3, for Sevin, Mia, and Nami, their employment and socioeconomic statuses have affected their perspectives and decision-

⁵³ Kristin L. Anderson, 655.

making processes. The stories of Sevin and Mia particularly imply a lack of social resources and inappropriate help from social welfare systems and police departments. Sevin did not have any place to stay after she moved out of her home as a result of her husband's emotional, verbal, and instrumental abuse. She had to stay in her car for two days with her child. Mia did not get appropriate help after calling 119. Rather, she was encouraged to solve her marital conflicts on her own, since marital issues are considered private matters. In addition, instead of receiving help to address her domestic violence situation, Mia had to decide whether she would allow her husband to be booked on a charge of adultery.

During my research and while recruiting volunteers, I had an opportunity to visit with a domestic violence shelter counselor in Seoul. While I conversed with her, she and I came to agree that many Korean women in conflictive and abusive marital relationships have not been well cared for, while women with brutal and chronic domestic violence experiences have recently been given attention based on the government's social welfare policy, which tries to exterminate three types of violence in Korean society: family, school, and sexual violence. In other words, women do not get appropriate help unless they have experienced brutal, physical, and/or chronic violence. "Unseen abuses" (보이지않는 학대나 폭력), such as verbal abuse, financial abuse, and controlling, have not been considered violent or abusive, and women with unseen abuses are excluded from receiving help from police and social welfare systems. These are other misuses of power as conveyed by the Power and Control Wheel viewed in Chapter 2. Even for women experiencing brutal and chronic domestic violence, there has been a lack of facilities, including shelters, to accommodate women with children. According to the shelter

counselor, only one domestic violence shelter is available in Seoul for women to live in for two years; all the other shelters only allow women with children (under 7 years old in case of boys) to stay for six months, occasionally extending the stay for three more months. During their stay, women have to find a place to live, a job to earn a living, and a school for their children to attend.

Another frustration that the domestic violence shelter counselor mentioned was a lack of training for social welfare workers and police officers in terms of domestic violence and a lack of communication among the private and public welfare systems supporting women and children who have been exposed to domestic violence. When women call for help, police officers often encourage them to solve their issues on their own and do not visit their homes. Even when couples are brought into the police station by police, they often hear similar responses from police station workers, since domestic violence is considered to occur as a result of marital conflicts or “domestic disputes,” and thus are private, family matters.⁵⁴ The counselor also mentioned that police officers do not know what kind of legal and other recourse is available for men and women in dealing with domestic violence. For example, women can request mandatory counseling for abusive men or restraining orders for a while, but officers often send couples back to their homes without suggesting any resources or options to them. For this reason, women become hesitant to call the police, since they have experienced inappropriate attention and inadequate help from police officers.

Therefore, as discussed in the literature review, lack of resources or supportive networks in meso- and exo-systems have caused women to not seek help from social

⁵⁴ Greenspun, 153.

institutions. While psychological studies have described women's reasons for remaining in abusive relationships, based on their typical feelings and behaviors, feminist and systemic approaches provide the understanding that various systems surrounding individuals and the reciprocal relationships among various systems affect women's lives, their roles, and their decision-making processes. Feminist and systemic approaches also recall the arguments of RCT: "relationships are embedded in culture ... Understanding the culture and its distortions is essential to understanding the individual who lives within or on the periphery of that culture."⁵⁵ As a result, I would draw the conclusion that the psychological issues found in research participants' lives have been "created and/or maintained within the context" of interrelated multiple systemic layers—interpersonal, familial, institutional, social, and cultural.⁵⁶ This conclusion recognizes that "the personal is political" and that "family issues are not only private issues, but also are large public issues," as argued in *From Culture Wars to Common Ground* by Browning et al.⁵⁷ These understandings challenge the patriarchal and gender-biased agendas still embedded in the Korean context.

Marriage and Life as Complicated

Even though my research participants seem to be trapped in multiple layers of systems that are not helpful for them, their stories reveal their life-long struggles or journeys to find the meaning of marriage, life, difficulties, and suffering in their lives. Sevin, Jina, Jisu, Hanna, Mia, and Nami presented marriage as something "complicated" that includes suffering, hardship, agony, responsibility, duty, obligation, volition,

⁵⁵ Jordan, "Relational-Cultural Therapy," 6.

⁵⁶ Greenspun, 154.

⁵⁷ Jordan, 26; Browning et al., 2.

happiness, endurance, and courage (see Chapter 3). Jina, Jisu, Mia, and Nami said that they realized that marriage or divorce is something that cannot be explained in a simple way. Jina communicated that marital relationships consist of various factors beyond conflicts; therefore, couples do not need to get divorced due to marital conflicts or domestic violence “if couples have something to shield them or something more important than their problems, such as children, financial stability, or faith.” She had come to consider marital conflicts to be “homework” for couples to work on, while in the past she had thought of conflicts as something bad and felt they should not exist. Looking back on her marriage and life, Hanna observed, “Life is half and half in the long run. Half happiness ... half suffering ... half joy ... [like *heeroaerak* (희노애락, 喜怒哀樂) meaning that life conveys happiness, anger, sadness, and joy]... I’m just enthusiastically walking in the life given to me ...” In addition, all the research participants expressed that the difficulties or suffering they have experienced in their marriages have “trained” them, and, as a result, they have “matured” or “grown” in various ways.

Research participants’ understandings of marriage, divorce, and life reveal the perspectives Korean people tend to have on life and suffering. These understandings are also related to the research participants’ beliefs and spirituality, which will be discussed in the next sections and Chapter 5. Since Koreans have experienced foreign invasions, many wars, colonization, and military repressions throughout their history, it has become almost impossible for them to define their humanity apart from their suffering. Korea has been considered “a land bridge through which continental culture was transmitted to Japan from China and Russia”; therefore, it was the target of foreign invasions from the

countries surrounding it and experienced many wars up until 1950.⁵⁸ Internally, Korean people have suffered from a slavery system based on classism, poverty resulting from wars, civil rights movements, the domination of the military ruling classes, and military repression.⁵⁹ Therefore, for Koreans, suffering has always been with them and has often been considered a normal aspect of life, not an element that can be escaped.

Some Korean scholars, such as Andrew Sung Park, a Korean *minjung* theologian, and Hyun Kyung Chung, a Korean feminist theologian, use the Korean concept of *han* as a starting point in understanding Koreans' suffering and their ways of dealing with their suffering, as discussed in the literature review. They argue that some Koreans have tried to get rid of *han*-causing factors, while some have tended to accept and endure suffering and *han*. On the one hand, throughout their history of suffering, some Korean people have aggressively resisted internal and external forces causing suffering to the people of Korea and have also worked to eliminate and liberate people from *han*-causing factors. In relation to suffering, the main theological reflections on the *minjung* and liberation were done under the Park Chung-hee and Chun Doo-hwan regimes in the 1970s and 1980s, which led to the development of Korean *minjung* theology.⁶⁰ The term *minjung* means "people" or "the mass of people" and has been used to indicate people "who are oppressed politically, exploited economically, alienated socially, and kept uneducated in cultural and intellectual matters."⁶¹ In other words, *Minjung* can be translated as "*han*-

⁵⁸ Pan Asian Parent Education Project, *Pan Asian Child Rearing Practices: Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Samoan, Vietnamese*. (San Diego, CA: Pan Asian Parent Education Project, 1982), 52.

⁵⁹ *Jong* (종) is the Korean term for slaves. Under the constitutional law before the fall of the Korean kingdom, a *jong* was allowed to marry another *jong* assigned by the owner of a household, and a *jong*'s children were considered the property of their owner and became *jong* themselves.

⁶⁰ Cyris H. S. Moon, *Minjung Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (New York: Orbis Books, 1985), x, 40.

⁶¹ Moon, 1.

ridden people” in Korea.⁶² Korean *minjung* theology is concerned with the liberation of suffering Koreans. Its understanding of liberation is based on the idea of rejecting *han*-causing factors, and their way of dealing with suffering and *han* is to get rid of *han*-causing factors. Cyris H. S. Moon states:

Minjung theology is Korean theology; it begins with the Korean *minjung*, their suffering and struggle. It is a theology of the oppressed in the Korean political situation, a theological response to the oppressors, and is for both [the] Korean church at large, as well as any who share in the struggles for liberation.⁶³

Since it begins with the suffering of the *minjung*, Moon calls *minjung* theology an “indigenous, grassroots theology.”⁶⁴ *Minjung* theology is a theological response to oppression and a theology for the oppressed in the Korean context. In *minjung* theology, liberation can be explained by the Korean concept, *dan*, meaning “a cutting off.”⁶⁵ Liberation is the cutting of “the oppressor-oppressed cycle” and the cutting of “the cycle of revenge.”⁶⁶ Therefore, the goal of *minjung* theology is “the renewal of human rights and the revolutionary change for justice in the social structure.”⁶⁷ In order to establish these goals, the oppressors have to stop their oppressing, and the oppressed have to stop wishing to be like their oppressors after they are liberated from their bondage.⁶⁸ Therefore, liberation, for *minjung* theology, implies the transformation of the oppressor and the oppressed.

At the same time, in dealing with suffering and *han*, some Korean people accept and endure suffering as a part of life. This attitude of accepting suffering and *han* can be

⁶² Moon, 1.

⁶³ Moon, 53.

⁶⁴ Moon, 53.

⁶⁵ Moon, 54.

⁶⁶ Moon, 55.

⁶⁷ Moon, 54.

⁶⁸ Moon, 55.

explained in relation to the influences of Shamanism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity on Korean people. In particular, in order to understand Korean Christian women's lives in dealing with their suffering, it is necessary to acknowledge the religious influences on Korean women and their religious practices. Since various religious practices of Shamanism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity have intermingled in the Korean context and women have been the main practitioners in these religions, it is important to reflect on the influences of various religions on Korean people, especially Korean women.⁶⁹

The first feature that needs to be considered is that throughout Korean history, women practicing Shamanism, Buddhism, and Christianity have released their anguish and cherished hopes for a better life through prayer and meditation. Shamanism is an indigenous religion that existed in the Korean peninsula before the tenth century B.C.E., during the Bronze Age, and is the most basic and fundamental religious practice of Koreans.⁷⁰ Shamanism is polytheistic, including a collection of gods in various locations, nature gods, and spirits of the dead, and these gods are considered to be protectors, sustainers, and rulers of human lives.⁷¹ Common religious practices of Korean women in Shamanism include the morning prayer to the gods for their families' wealth and health and for national safety, and through these kinds of religious practices, Korean women

⁶⁹ Much research has been done to examine the influences of the religious traditions of Shamanism, Buddhism, and Confucianism on Korean Christianity in Korean history. As examples, Pastoral Counseling Center, *한국문화와 목회상담 [Korean Culture and Pastoral Counseling]* (Seoul: Pastoral Counseling Press, 2003); Sang Jin Choi, *한국인의 심리학 [Korean Psychology]* (Seoul: Chung Ang University Press). 2000.

⁷⁰ An, 11.

⁷¹ An, 13-15.

release their repressed feelings, look for support from the gods they serve to overcome their miserable lives, and hope for a better future.⁷²

When Buddhism became a national religion under the Koryo government (918-1329), Korean women, the main practitioners of Buddhism, practiced Buddhism as a Shamanistic practice. Since Buddhism integrated itself with Shamanism to implant itself in the Korean context, Shamanism was sometimes fused with Buddhism. Korean women went to the temple to pray when they needed help in their misfortunes, such as illness, natural disasters, and foreign invasion, just as they practiced their religious faith in the shamanistic context and tried to gain strength to sustain their lives through prayer.⁷³

When Christianity came to Korea in the 18th century, it was also slowly and unconsciously absorbed into the multiple religions of the Korean context. Even though Western Christian missionaries tried to demonize all other religious practices, the Korean people developed their own religious practices, such as the early morning worship service or dawn prayer meeting, and Korean Christian women prayed for their families and for release from their distress. For some Korean women, as also presented in the descriptions of my research participants, the survival strategy or coping strategy for them to deal with their suffering is to release their anguish through religious practices and to hope for change and a better life. Except for Hanna, a non-Christian, for the research participants, religious practices, such as prayer, meditation, singing hymns, or dancing, and their faith in Christianity were their ways to release their frustrated feelings and anguish and undergird their hopes for their lives.

⁷² An, 15-16.

⁷³ An, 27.

In addition, Buddhist teachings, such as, “Life is suffering (고, 苦),” and, “Life conveys happiness, anger, sadness, and joy (희로애락, 喜怒哀樂),” were easily adopted by many Korean people, since they had a long history of suffering. In addition, the Buddhist teaching of *Ja-Bi* (자비, 慈悲), meaning that people have to live their lives with love, empathy, and compassion, and the biblical teachings of “love your neighbors” and “love your enemy” have influenced and intermingled in the minds of Koreans, and they appear to have become the basis of a compassionate spirituality for Korean people. My research participants presented their compassion or compassionate spiritualities when they described their feelings for their spouses by using the terms *jeong* (정), *ansruum* (안쓰러움), *bulsangham* (불쌍함), *younmin* (연민, 憐愍 or 憐憫), and *chukunjisim* (측은지심, 惻隱之心), which can be translated into the English words *affection*, *pity*, *sympathy*, and *compassion* (compassionate spirituality will be more thoroughly discussed in Chapter 5). In addition to Buddhist teachings, the sacrificial love of women has been elevated not only in the Korean patriarchal tradition and Confucian teachings, but also in Christianity, based on the idea of the sacrifice of Jesus and “redemptive suffering.”⁷⁴

Some of these religious perspectives, teachings, and practices from Shamanism, Buddhism, and Confucianism have been transmitted from generation to generation and still remain in Korean’s minds unconsciously and consciously, whether they are Christian or non-Christian. Therefore, some Koreans and Korean women tend to understand suffering as an aspect of life that cannot be escaped, and they tend to release their anguish, sadness, and frustration through their religious practices, such as prayer and

⁷⁴ Ai Ra Kim, 6-7. Jung Ha Kim, *Bridge-Makers and Cross-Bearers*, 31.

meditation, so they can sustain their lives. Even though these perspectives, attitudes, and Korean multi-religious influences could be criticized as passive ways of dealing with suffering, the next section on spiritual dimensions, and Chapter 5, argue that Korean women can also be seen as agents in that they have their own beliefs, courage, resilience, and vocations, and their religious/spiritual beliefs or spirituality in their particular contexts can be different from others' spiritualities and need to be respected.

Spiritual Dimensions: Miscellaneous Identities as Victim, Survivor, and Agent

In the section of this chapter in which I have discussed the holistic dimensions of Fitchett's 7x7 model, the implicit realities women have confronted have been interpreted through reflecting on the reciprocal relationships between women's psychologies, lives, roles, and their decision-making processes and the familial, institutional, social, and cultural systems that surround women. In this section, the spiritual dimensions suggested by the model—beliefs and meaning, vocation and consequences, experience and emotion, courage and growth, ritual and practice, community, and authority and guidance—will be explored and organized into several themes based on the descriptions of research participants.⁷⁵ While research participants have been criticized for maintaining traditional roles and for being passive in dealing with suffering, prejudice, and gender-biased ideologies in Korean society (as discussed in Chapter 2), the spiritual dimensions help to not only explore their strengths, agency, coping strategies, resilience, courage, growth, and vocations that have been neglected and underestimated, but also to recognize Korean women's spiritual needs and resources in relation to the holistic dimensions. In other words, the spiritual dimensions provide understanding of research participants' "basic

⁷⁵ Fitchett, 42.

worldviews,” respect their “self-determination,” and address their “strengths” rather than their problems.⁷⁶ Through these dimensions, research participants’ self-confidence, self-efficacy, coping strategies, resilience, and courage will be explored in this section. Their agency, not only in relation to their vocations and hopes, but also in becoming resources for other women who are suffering, will be reflected upon. Furthermore, it will be argued that research participants have miscellaneous identities, as agents and not only as victims and survivors in conflictive and abusive marital relationships.

Self-Confidence and Self-Efficacy

One of the main reasons for remaining in abusive relationships discussed in the literature review was women’s low self-esteem. Low self-esteem or “lack of self-worth” makes women vulnerable to abuse and makes it harder for women to leave abusive relationships as well as to get help.⁷⁷ In addition, women with low self-esteem often blame themselves for what happened, or ongoing emotional and verbal abuse can make women think that they deserve to be abused for being “stupid, worthless, incompetent, bad wives, and poor mothers.”⁷⁸

Among the research participants, only Jina talked about low self-esteem. She shared that she has worked hard to improve her self-esteem during her life and has achieved it in a sense in that she has had her own position at work, endured suffering, and overcome some of her marital difficulties. In addition, for her, her reason for not getting divorced was partially related to her self-esteem. Jina mentioned that her personality could not cope with divorce because thinking about divorce itself was painful and

⁷⁶ David R. Hodge, *Spiritual Assessment: Handbook for Helping Professionals* (Botsford, CT: North American Association of Christians in Social Work, 2003), 6-7.

⁷⁷ Gaddis, 14-15; Martin, 39.

⁷⁸ Gaddis, 14-15; Martin, 39.

frustrating for her. If she got divorced, she thought she would feel guilty and intimidated; she would be considered a pitiful daughter or a problem child; and she would feel lonely, since there has been no one among her family and friends who has gotten divorced. According to Jina, this was her personal struggle and was somewhat related to her self-esteem in that she did not want to ruin the self-esteem that she has worked on improving as a result of thinking about divorce.

Even though Mia and Nami did not use the term *self-esteem*, they presented similar ideas in terms of themselves and divorce. Mia and Nami said that they could not cope with divorce, would feel shame and guilt, and would feel left out or alienated as a result of divorce. They also indicated that they felt proud for keeping their family together and overcoming their difficulties with their faith in God. Therefore, for Jina, Mia, and Nami, low self-esteem played a role in their lives and decision-making processes. However, there was no indication that they blamed themselves or thought they deserved what they have experienced in their marriages. They indicated that their husbands' issues, whether anger, abuse, or infidelity, were their husbands' issues, not theirs, and originated with or were related to their husbands' families of origin.

In the cases of Sevin, Jisu, Hanna, Mia, and Nami, they expressed a lack of confidence in the past about their ability to live by themselves or as single parents with their children after divorce. When they considered divorce as they confronted marital conflicts, abuse, or violence, the inability to support themselves financially was one of the obstacles to them leaving. However, Jisu and Hanna revealed their growth in these matters, since they have made money for a living and have taken care of their children without their husbands' financial support for years. Since Sevin's husband had a stroke,

she has felt responsible for managing her family's affairs. For Jina and Julie, finances were not a concern at all because they had their own careers. So, while some of the research participants felt a lack of confidence in themselves and their abilities in the past, they have changed and become more confident in managing their lives.

Instead of self-esteem, the main psychological issues of research participants were feelings of fear and shame related to social values. As described in the holistic dimensions part of this chapter, for Sevin, Jina, Jisu, Hanna, Mia, and Nami, their feelings of fear are related to certain changes after divorce or losing relationships with their children or family members, rather than low self-esteem. For Jina, Mia, and Nami, their feelings of shame are related to social discrimination against divorced women rather than their own psychological issues, such as low self-esteem, while for Sevin and Jina, their feelings of shame are related to the reputation of their parents and their Christian family. In spite of feeling shame, Sevin, Jina, Julie, Jisu, Mia, and Nami asked for help from their parents, friends, pastors, and/or church members, while Jisu and Hanna did not feel shame in asking for help. Their psychological feelings are considered to be related to their social values in relationships and communities.

Some of the research participants presented issues related to self-esteem or self-confidence in the past, but they also revealed changes in their lives. In other words, the findings from the research participants lead to the conclusion that low self-esteem is not strongly related to their reasons for continuing to live with their spouses, and their psychological issues are more likely related to social, religious, and cultural dimensions in the Korean context. This conclusion resonates with what critics of psychology and individualism have said, as discussed in Chapter 2. Since research participants

experienced verbal, emotional, and instrumental abuse or physical violence, they could be considered victims of abuse and violence. However, it is hard to agree that women in my study did not leave their spouses due to low self-esteem and consider them as having low self-esteem or merely “victims.” At some point, they might be considered victims of abuse or violence, but they also had their own coping strategies and resilience to deal with their situations, as discussed in the following section.

Coping Strategies, Resilience, and Courage

In dealing with marital conflicts, abuse, or violence, research participants had their own coping strategies, “a complex set of processes that may moderate influences of stressful life events,” which they had developed when experiencing or in response to adversity and stress.⁷⁹ As “inner and external resources,” coping strategies convey not only the women’s own abilities to manage or respond to stress, but also the social and communal support systems that they used in difficult situations.⁸⁰ Their inner resources of positive coping strategies can be explained as individual resilience, “the ability to respond or perform positively in the face of adversity, to achieve despite the presence of disadvantages, or to significantly exceed expectations under given negative circumstances.”⁸¹ Individual resilience refers to “internal locus of control, emotional regulation, belief systems, mentors, self-efficacy, effective coping skills, increased education, skills, and training, health, temperament, and gender” as presented in Figure 3.⁸²

⁷⁹ Lu and Chen, 297-308. Cited in Davis, “The Strongest Women,” 1249.

⁸⁰ Davis, 1249.

⁸¹ Brennan, 55-64; R. Gilligan, 125-45.

⁸² Benzies and Mychasiuk, 105.

Sevin used to drink, smoke, and play computer games to release her stress in the past, but she stopped using these coping mechanisms when she realized their negative effects on her life. Consequently, she began taking classes in such areas as cooking, guitar, English, French, being a barista, and beauty, and she watched sermons on YouTube. After Sevin became a faithful Christian, she began actively attending church activities and was moved by the Bible and Hebrew classes she went to. She also shared that she participated in a dawn prayer service and fasted from breakfast for 40 days with two friends in faith in order to release her afflictions and find ways to deal with her marital difficulties.

Jina and Julie often released their stress by having private time alone, and their coping strategies were walking, drinking tea or coffee, meditation, and prayer. Jina also presented her participation in higher education, while Julie presented her desire to be educated for her career. For Jisu, prayer, fasting, singing hymns, taking classes at religious institutions, and learning liturgical dance or dance therapy were her ways to cope with her difficulties and to find solutions. Hanna indicated that she took classes related to leadership, reading, debate, presentations, laugh therapy, computer licensing, and so on to change herself and also to become emotionally and financially independent from her husband. As a result of her continuous effort, she received licenses and got a job. In the cases of Mia and Nami, they actively attended worship services and church activities in order to release their stress and to find ways to deal with their marital difficulties. In addition, as a response to their husbands' verbal and instrumental abuse, some of my research participants responded passive-aggressively by stonewalling and

ignoring their husbands, while others actively and aggressively fought back in response to their spouses' abuse or violence.

Along with their own internal abilities to control, regulate emotion, and participate in education and training, all the participants except for Hanna, an atheist, presented their religious and spiritual beliefs as coping strategies and sources for individual resiliency. As discussed in the literature review, people often turn not only to their inner religious and spiritual beliefs, but also to their religious communities, religious leaders, and religious and spiritual practices in times of difficulty and crisis. Many research studies indicate that women experiencing domestic violence often seek resources for coping from their religions and spirituality in order to heal, deal with marital conflicts, and/or understand the meanings of their sufferings and crises.⁸³

Some of my research participants have used religious and spiritual practices, such as prayer, meditation, fasting, worship, or rituals, as resources for coping with suffering, struggles, and crises, and these resources have provided them with “strength, wisdom, or courage in facing life challenges,” which results in generating “feelings of hope and peace.”⁸⁴ In addition, sermons, biblical teachings, worship, and rituals played roles in “guiding them through life passages and times of adversity.”⁸⁵ In the cases of Jisu and Mia, biblical messages from churches have influenced their coping strategies and decision-making processes in dealing with marital conflicts and abuse. Jisu indicated that biblical messages from churches, such as “forgive seventy times seven” and “love your enemies,” have affected her life and decision-making. She shared that she had tried to

⁸³ Gillum et al., 240; Walsh, “Family Resilience,” 5. The definitions of religion and spirituality were discussed in the literature review.

⁸⁴ Walsh, *Spiritual Resources in Family Therapy*, 14.

⁸⁵ Walsh, *Spiritual Resources in Family Therapy*, 14; Imber-Black, 229-46.

“empty” herself so she could forgive and love. After her son passed away, she said that she did not attend church because she became busy making money for a living, but she still believes God loves her. Mia indicated that two biblical stories, the story of Hosea who forgave his unfaithful wives several times and the story of Jesus’ life and death on a cross to forgive sinners, have shaped her perspectives and attitudes. Hanna, even though she is not Christian and never involved in a religious body, heard similar messages from her Buddhist parents and her Catholic parents-in-law, messages to forgive her husband and accept him,.

Some scholars criticize the patriarchal structures of churches and gender-biased teachings, such as endurance and forgiveness, and consider religious beliefs and practices to be passive defense mechanisms used by women to reduce their anxieties and tensions or methods of repressing, denying, and avoiding the realities of their situations.⁸⁶ However, research participants indicated that their religious beliefs, religious/spiritual practices, and/or biblical teachings have been their resources and support systems for “healing, recovery, and resilience.”⁸⁷ While religion, spirituality, and religious/spiritual teachings and practices have been neglected and underestimated in the field of psychology and by mental health professionals, the descriptions of research participants support the arguments of studies of coping strategies and resilience that draw attention to the significant roles and influences of religion in coping with suffering, struggles, and crises.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Pargament, 167.

⁸⁷ Walsh, *Spiritual Resources in Family Therapy*, 3-4.

⁸⁸ Pargament, 4.

In addition to their individual coping strategies and resilience, research participants also presented their use of familial and communal resources, not only asking for help from families, friends, and people in their faith communities, as discussed in the holistic dimensions section, but also attending classes to develop themselves or increase self-efficacy. Research participants presented their continuous efforts to solve marital conflicts through their own self-reflection and by seeking help from family members, friends, and higher education or training programs in their communities.

Their self-reflection and willingness to change themselves and seek help could be considered signs of their courage, not only to confront their own perspectives, beliefs, and lifestyles, but also to work on issues related to couple dynamics, such as different personalities, communication styles, conflict resolution styles, and even family of origin issues. Some of them have also continuously struggled to find answers to the question of the meaning of life and difficulties on existential, religious, and spiritual levels. Research participants reveal their courage by showing their willingness and ability to challenge their beliefs and lifestyles, to “enter the dark night of the soul,” and to tolerate instability and uncertainty in their lives in order to deal with marital issues.⁸⁹ These aspects can also be named “relational resilience” or “relational courage” in dealing with their marital relationships and life difficulties.⁹⁰ In RCT, relational resiliency or relational courage is “the ability to connect, reconnect, and/or resist disconnection,” and developing relational resiliency means not only “the capacity to move back into connection” after experiencing disconnection, but also “the capacity to reach out for help.”⁹¹ Therefore, research

⁸⁹ Fitchett, 48.

⁹⁰ Jordan, *Relational-Cultural Therapy*, 32, 36.

⁹¹ Jordan, 31.

participants' continuous efforts to solve marital conflicts and relational issues and their recognition of and ability to use resources or support systems that are available to them are examples of their relational resilience.

As a result of courage and relational resilience, the women in my study became confident in dealing with their own issues, lives, and conflicts, even though the degree of confidence will vary depending on the individual. As Hanna commented, "I'm the one who understands my husband better than others." My research participants, as wives, could be considered to be the ones who best understand their spouses, since they have spent a great deal of time trying to understand their spouses' personalities, family backgrounds, defense mechanisms, and problem-solving patterns. They also became confident in making their own final decisions, whether to live with their husbands or separately, after reflecting not only on their own thoughts, but also on others' advice. Hanna said, "I listened ... but, I made my decision ... Anyway, I take responsibility for my decision. My decision is important ... no matter what others say ... Others, whether my mother or friends, can't take on my responsibility ..." Jisu reflected, "Human beings make their own decisions in spite of others' opinions. In the end, they have their own way ..." Furthermore, research participants became able to define the meanings of marriage, life, and/or suffering, about which they did not have clear ideas before marriage; this was discussed in the section, *Life as Complicated*, as one of the holistic dimensions.

In talking about women in marital conflicts and abusive relationships, scholars and practitioners have focused on personal psychological aspects and often undervalued women's strength, courage, coping strategies, and resiliency. However, as Gaddis argues, negatively labeling women in conflictive and abusive marital relationships may serve "to

wrongly reprimand the victim,” and their recovery processes should be approached with supportive and nonjudgmental attitudes.⁹² Discussion about women’s coping strategies and resilience leads to paying attention to women’s inner strengths, courage, and resources, rather than considering women “helpless victims” and their “traits as weaknesses.”⁹³ Since research participants demonstrated that they had “strong opinions” and “a sense of personal power” in dealing with their conflictive and abusive marital relationships, they have to be considered “survivors” rather than “victims,” applying the argument by Gondolf and Fisher.⁹⁴ In addition, they can be considered “agents,” since they showed their courage and willingness to become resources for others experiencing marital conflicts.

Becoming Agents as Resources

In terms of the holistic dimensions, I have observed that family, friends, and churches have been resources for women in conflictive relationships, albeit with limitations and some negative aspects. When research participants reached out for help, some of their support systems were helpful, while some of them were not. Recognizing and reflecting on what was helpful and not helpful to them eventually led them to become proper resources or support systems for others. During the interviews, all of the women described how they have responded or will respond when they meet someone struggling with marital issues. In reflecting on their experiences, they all mentioned that it is important to listen to others’ stories, so they feel heard and empathized with. Because they often felt not understood by others when seeking help, they revealed how important

⁹² Gaddis, 13-14.

⁹³ Davis, 1248, 1250.

⁹⁴ Goldner et al., 9.

it is to listen to others, including their desires and hopes, rather than imposing their own desires and life philosophies on others. All of the participants also noted that telling a struggling woman to pray is not always helpful, and being present for others is more important than any other form of assistance.

In the case of Nami, she mentioned that it was painful for her to stay at home by herself, since no one, except a person who encouraged her to go to church, came to her house to hear her and help her. She said that it would have been better for her if someone had invited her to go to church earlier. For this reason, she became active in proclaiming what she has experienced in her marriage and with God, whereas before she came to know God, she used to be silent and felt ashamed to share her stories with others. Mia told similar stories and indicated that she became courageous about sharing her story and wisdom with other women in marital struggles.

Like Mia and Nami, the other research participants revealed that they have provided particular advice to others preparing for marriage or experiencing marital difficulties. Julie and Hanna have tried to communicate with their children regarding their own marriages and to listen to their children's perspectives on marriage. Jina, Mia, and Nami shared that they do not encourage divorce unless it is a life-threatening situation, because marital conflicts are something to overcome rather than avoid and because people can learn from and become more mature in dealing with conflicts. They also indicated that marriage is something complicated that cannot be explained simply, and it consists of various elements. Jina, Julie, and Hanna have advocated to establish premarital programs or communication programs in their churches or communities. In particular, Julie mentioned that she tells couples who are preparing for marriage three

things: (1) to ask rather than guess what is going on when facing marital conflicts; (2) to have a mentor for their marriage; and (3) to ask for help from a reliable person or mentor if they experience marital abuse or violence.

Just as Jung Ha Kim has observed (see literature review), my research participants consciously and unconsciously decided to become active agents as resources and support systems for others, sharing their own “micromanipulative survival skills” and transmitting “hidden transcripts” from themselves to other women in marital struggles.⁹⁵ Since research participants had heard words of wisdom about survival from other women, whether their mothers, friends, or women in faith (as described in Chapter 3 and the holistic dimensions part of this chapter), they added their own experiences to what they had heard and utilized and articulated their own “informal means of influence,” wisdom, and coping strategies to help others survive, resist, and/or become empowered.⁹⁶ Research participants also felt proud about sharing the strategies they had developed.

Recognizing and reflecting on the resources and limitations of family, friends, and communities gave the research participants strength to become agents in their own lives and others’ lives, and it fostered their “relational confidence,” which is “the capacity to move another person, effect a change in a relationship, or affect the well-being of all participants in relationship.”⁹⁷ In addition, they become agents by establishing “growth-fostering relationships.”⁹⁸ Their lives and decisions witness to their efforts to exercise mutual empathy, i.e., “openness to being affected by and affecting another person,” and

⁹⁵ Jung Ha Kim, “Labor of Compassion,” 213. The definitions of the terms were discussed in the literature review.

⁹⁶ Jung Ha Kim, 209-10.

⁹⁷ Jordan, *Relational-Cultural Therapy*, 39.

⁹⁸ Jordan, 24. A growth-fostering relationship is described as “a fundamental and complex process of active participation in the development and growth of other people and the relationship that results in mutual development.” Jordan, 103.

to engage in mutual empowerment by building “a relationship of engagement, of being present and caring about the relationship as well as the individuals in it.”⁹⁹ According to RCT, in order to resolve conflicts and disconnections, humans need to increase their capacity for mutual empathy and mutual empowerment.¹⁰⁰ Through their own experiences and reflections, the women in this study have improved their abilities for mutual empathy and mutual empowerment.

When confronting difficulties in relationships or the limitations of resources, it is easy to criticize and seek to repair or eliminate the limitations; however, it is important to recognize that conflicts or difficulties can be considered opportunities to grow, as Clinebell argues:

It is important to recognize that an individual’s potentialities for healing and wholeness are within that person’s total situation. All aspects of our lives, our cultural and historical settings, offer limitations and resources for growth. Furthermore, our wholeness options are continually evolving. Each life stage, each change in our personal, historical or cultural situation brings fresh possibilities and new limitations in all of the dimensions and in our lives. In the flow of one’s passing years, today’s choices expand or limit tomorrow’s wholeness possibilities. Thus a person’s wholeness potential is a dynamic, developing stream, not a fixed quantity.¹⁰¹

During the interviews, research participants mentioned that marital conflicts and difficulties have provided them opportunities to become emotionally, financially, and/or spiritually confident, and they felt proud of themselves for enduring and overcoming difficulties in their marriages and eventually growing and maturing as human beings. As RCT asserts is necessary, they recognized their experiences of conflicts as “necessary for change and growth.”¹⁰² In addition, the limitations of family members, friends, and

⁹⁹ Jordan, 104-05.

¹⁰⁰ Jordan, 24.

¹⁰¹ Clinebell, 20.

¹⁰² Jordan, 4.

communities as resources provided opportunities for them to become agents, not only as effective resources and support systems, but also as people who challenged their families, friends, and communities with their strong opinions about what is helpful for women. The important point, then, is that it is necessary to acknowledge, respect, and appreciate women's "sufferings as well as the ways they have learned to survive when important relationships have been hurtful," as argued in RCT, and also foster "potentialities for healing and wholeness" in individuals and communities as suggested by Clinebell.¹⁰³

Vocation and Hope

Research participants presented their life goals, vocations, and hopes in the interviews, and one of the main goals or vocations for all participants was to keep their families together under any and all circumstances. Getting a divorce or breaking up their families did not fit with their life principles, whether they were developed under the influences of their religious teachings and beliefs or based on family-oriented and gender-biased expectations in the Korean social and cultural context. According to Jordan, the idea of relational resilience is related to the concept of relational courage, which helps people to continue to work on their relational conflicts in order to restore and nurture growth-fostering relationships.¹⁰⁴ In other words, women's strong commitment allows them to have the strength and courage to cope with their afflictions in conflictive and abusive marital relationships. Therefore, strength and courage are strongly related to women's beliefs, vocations, and hopes, which can be considered part of their individual sources of resiliency.

In the research conducted by Goldner et al, in spite of their suffering in

¹⁰³ Jordan, 35; Clinebell, 20.

¹⁰⁴ Jordan, 32.

conflictive and abusive relationships, women “in nearly every case” were more likely to stay in their family in order “to hold connections together, to heal and care for another, no matter what the personal cost.”¹⁰⁵ While some psychologists and feminists might criticize these women, saying they were dependent and had low self-esteem, the main point argued by Gondolf and Fisher is that women develop “a sense of self, of self-worth, and of feminine identity through their ability to build and maintain relationships with others.”¹⁰⁶ Based on “relational feminism,” as discussed in the literature review, they paid attention not only to women’s equality, which “encompassed sexual differences,” but also to “human relationality as continuity in difference,” especially within women’s experiences of motherhood, rather than emphasizing “personal autonomy, choice, [and] self-realization” and devaluing “motherhood [and] relationships with men” as often occurs from the perspective of individualistic feminism.¹⁰⁷

Feminist perspectives on family issues are often presented as “stereotypes, cast as monolithic, and misunderstood,” because what is portrayed are generalizations of individualistic feminist ideas, which can be seen as “egotistic, individualistic, anti-men, anti-children, or antireligious.”¹⁰⁸ Therefore, some women’s as well as men’s concerns with and resistance to feminism are directed toward individualist feminism. In *Feminism Is Not the Story of My Life*, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese describes the reasons why many women hesitate to define themselves as feminists, even though they have “benefited from feminist gains” and even worked to achieve some of the women’s rights that feminists

¹⁰⁵ Goldner et al., 9.

¹⁰⁶ Goldner et al., 9.

¹⁰⁷ Browning et al., 164, 166.

¹⁰⁸ Browning et al., 161.

have proclaimed.¹⁰⁹ According to Fox-Genovese, these women have thought that “feminism was not talking about their lives” in that they still value binding ties to their families, husbands, and children, along with their independence and individual rights.¹¹⁰ Thus, some women think that feminism cares mainly about political issues and policies, such as pro-choice versus pro-life, rather than women’s real concerns in their daily lives.¹¹¹ For Fox-Genovese, the main failure of feminism, that is, individualistic feminism, is its excessive focus on “women as independent agents rather than as members of families.”¹¹²

Relational feminists try to articulate a psychology of women’s development that is based on women’s real experiences, rather than adopting developmental theories worked out by male scholars based on the experiences of men. In particular, scholars in the RCT school name women’s existence as a “being-in-relation” and stress human connectedness and relatedness, while criticizing “the prevailing traditional developmental theories” emphasizing autonomy and independence.¹¹³ The core concept of RCT is that “human beings grow through and toward connection” throughout their lives, and the majority of suffering for human beings is based on “isolation” or “disconnection.”¹¹⁴ While individual feminists, along with the traditional developmental psychologists, value the “the development of autonomy and independence, abstract critical thought, and the unfolding of a morality of rights and justice” for both men and women, relational feminists’ arguments challenge people to pay attention to “the development of

¹⁰⁹ Fox-Genovese, 2.

¹¹⁰ Fox-Genovese, 2-3.

¹¹¹ Fox-Genovese, 17, 25.

¹¹² Fox-Genovese, 28.

¹¹³ Jordan, *Relational-Cultural Therapy*, 1; Jordan, *Women’s Growth in Diversity*, 14.

¹¹⁴ Jordan, *Relational-Cultural Therapy*, 1.

interdependency, intimacy, nurturance, and contextual thought” in all human beings.¹¹⁵

Just as Gaddis and Greenspun argued, my research participants did not want to end their marriages, except for Hanna, but instead, they wanted to have happy families without conflicts, abuse, or violence.¹¹⁶ Relational feminists’ perspectives encourage acknowledging and valuing women’s “ongoing need for connection” and their desire to work on their relationships.¹¹⁷ Women in abusive relationships are often criticized for not being able to separate themselves from their partners, but relational feminist approaches advocate considering women’s decisions as ways of affirming their identities and practicing strategies to deal with abuse or violence; therefore, they are considered agents as well as survivors, with their own voices and coping strategies, whether constructive or destructive.

Some scholars, especially Korean Christian female scholars, argue that these women need to be considered active agents in their lives rather than victims or survivors. Jung Ha Kim¹¹⁸ and Wonhee Anne Joh,¹¹⁹ argue that Korean Christian women are not solely passive in dealing with their suffering; rather “they are social agents actively engaged in their own history making,” who carry hopes for their families.¹²⁰ These hopes include desires for their husbands, their children, and a better life in the future. First, all of my research participants presented their hopes that their spouses would change, and

¹¹⁵ Belenky et al., 6-7.

¹¹⁶ Gaddis, 14; Greenspun, 157.

¹¹⁷ Jordan, *Relational-Cultural Therapy*, 97.

¹¹⁸ Jung Ha Kim is a 1.5-generation Korean American woman who teaches classes in gender, sociology of religion, racial and ethnic relations, social theories, and introduction to sociology at Georgia State University, Georgia, and who is a co-chair of the Asian American Consultation for the American Academy of Religion.

¹¹⁹ Wonhee Anne Joh is an assistant professor of theology at Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

¹²⁰ Jung Ha Kim, “Labor of Compassion,” 210.

some of them saw possibilities in their spouses that they would change. Sevin, Jina, Julie, and Mia shared that they have experienced gradual or dramatic changes in their spouses. Some Korean women remain in conflictive relationships because they are hopeful about the potential for their spouses to eventually change. Second, several of the research participants presented their hopes for their children. One of the concerns in thinking about divorce was what would happen to their children. A few women decided not to get divorced because staying married would give their children opportunities or better life situations in the future, rather than growing up without their fathers and/or being discriminated against by others as children of divorced parents. Jina, Julie, Jisu, Mia, Hanna, and Nami presented their concerns for their children. They wanted their children to have connections with their fathers and did not want them to struggle, be disadvantaged, or be discriminated against as children with separated or divorce parents in their lives. Third, research participants also had hopes for themselves. The reason for women remaining with their spouses was their hope to have better lives by being with their spouses and children, rather than without them. Even though Hanna decided to get divorced, she thought her decision would result in a better life for herself and her husband.

These women's hopes could be seen as unrealistic and might not be understood if one is using dualistic, "either/or" concepts. One cannot understand some Korean women's reasons for staying if one perceives status inequalities and role conflicts as merely negative or as power struggles or if one considers human relationships and conflicts healthy only if power is balanced and roles well defined.¹²¹ Jung Ha Kim points

¹²¹ Jung Ha Kim, *Bridge-Makers and Cross-Bearers*, 128.

out that some scholars, both Korean and non-Korean, fail to recognize that “status inconsistency experienced by racial-ethnic women is not something to be balanced or corrected by achieving equilibration or crystallization of their stable statuses; rather, it is a way of life.”¹²² In her interviews with Korean women from her church, Kim found that these women paid little attention to the “women’s freedom and liberation” conversations found in Western feminism and liberation theology in dealing with their oppressive situations.¹²³ According to Kim, this is partly because they found little reason to give up their traditional roles, especially without alternative avenues for achieving higher status and greater power. Korean Christian women have learned to hold onto the status and power that lie in playing the traditionally-expected gender roles, and in these roles they experience some rewards in their lives.¹²⁴ In addition, since some highly educated Korean feminists who have adopted Western feminist approaches have shown a lack of understanding of abused women’s decisions and circumstances by criticizing women who stay in the midst of suffering and urging them to leave their circumstances behind and stand on their own two feet, the perspectives of Korean feminist scholars do not appeal to all Korean women. This has caused many women to remain silent so as not to be criticized.¹²⁵

Miscellaneous Identities

After interviewing 135 women regarding their changing concepts of self and

¹²² Jung Ha Kim, 129.

¹²³ Jung Ha Kim, “Labor of Compassion,” 212. Jung Ha Kim’s research results with Korean American women in her church revealed that Christianity is both oppressive and liberatory at the same time. As presented in the multi-religious reflection part, Christianity has been used to legitimate the multifaceted oppression of women; on the other hand, Christianity has also been a foundation for advocating for social change and justice for the poor and the oppressed.

¹²⁴ Jung Ha Kim, 212.

¹²⁵ Jung Ha Kim, 127.

relationships with others, Belenky et al. discerned and described in their book, *Women's Ways of Knowing*, five ways of knowing that women use: silence, received knowing, subjective knowing, procedural knowing, and constructed knowing.¹²⁶ Applying their categories to my research participants, some women could be seen as being in a position of silence, in which they experience themselves as “mindless and voiceless” and unquestioningly obey external authority.¹²⁷ For example, Nami could be considered to have been silent about what happened to her, since she isolated herself and blamed herself without seeking help in the past. However, she seemed to be in the position of received knowing in that she began to go to church and enthusiastically attended worship services and other activities because she felt understood and cared for at church.

Along with Nami, Sevin and Mia could be considered in a position of received knowing, in which they consider themselves “capable of receiving, even reproducing, knowledge from the all-knowing external authorities, but not capable of creating knowledge on their own.”¹²⁸ Sevin, Mia, and Nami adopted biblical messages in understanding and coping with their situations and have given authority to what they have learned from churches.

Some research participants could be regarded as in a position of subjective knowledge, in which they are capable of having personal and private knowledge and truth, and some could be in a position of procedural knowledge, in which they are devoted to “learning and applying objective procedures for obtaining and communicating knowledge.”¹²⁹ Sevin, Jina, Jisu, and Hanna have continuously reflected on their marital

¹²⁶ Belenky et al., 3, 11, 15.

¹²⁷ Belenky et al., 15.

¹²⁸ Belenky et al., 15.

¹²⁹ Belenky et al., 15.

relationships, not only by reflecting on others' advice, but also by attending classes and learning new ideas. Sevin continued taking classes, such as Bible study and Hebrew, after she came to know God. She said that her relationships with her husband and child have helped her to understand God and vice versa. Jina indicated that she was able to improve her self-esteem by attending schools, starting her own career, and improving her relationship with her husband. Jisu and Hanna have also continuously attended several classes, not only to understand themselves, but also to understand their relationships with their spouses.

Jina, Jisu, and Hanna could be considered in a position of procedural knowing and/or constructed knowledge, in which they experience themselves as "creators of knowledge," acknowledge "all knowledge as contextual," and value "both subjective and objective strategies for knowing."¹³⁰ They often described their perspectives in terms of human life and suffering.

Even though I categorized research participants into certain positions based on the transcripts of their interviews, I am also aware that I cannot categorize them into particular positions with any certainty, since my interpretations are based on what they said during one or two meetings. In addition, as discussed, some might be seen in the position of silence in particular matters and during particular time periods, while they could be considered in the position of constructed knowing in other matters and time periods. In other words, their positions could be determined differently depending on the issues of focus and the time periods during which they were evaluated. As indicated by Belenky et al., these five positions are "not necessarily fixed, exhaustive, or universal

¹³⁰ Belenky et al., 15.

categories” and cannot adequately describe “the complexities and uniqueness of an individual woman’s thought and life.”¹³¹ Therefore, research participants’ understandings of their lives and their decisions to continue living with their spouses in the midst of suffering cannot easily be sorted out into particular categories. It is hard to say that they have self-esteem or low self-esteem in all matters. It is also difficult to say that they are victims, survivors, or agents all the time.

My professional and personal experience suggests that all human beings have the potential to present opposing personal characteristics, depending on the issues and time periods under consideration. Similarly, it is my experience that human beings change as time passes and as they learn and gain new experiences. Even though research participants could be regarded as not confident in some matters, this does not mean they are not confident in other matters or in all moments of their lives. Some research participants presented a lack of confidence in relation to certain issues, while at the same time they presented strong levels of self-reflection and self-affirmation. In dealing with conflicts, abuse, or violence in their marriages, women can be seen variously as victims, survivors, or agents depending on the situations or the moments.

As indicated by Pamela Cooper-White in her article, “Complicated Woman,” women and women’s lives are complicated, not only because of their multiple roles and relationships as daughters, mothers, wives, employees, and so on, but also because of their “multiple internal states of emotion and identity.”¹³² Therefore, it is necessary to be mindful of the importance of multiplicity and complexity when exploring and seeking to understand Korean women who stay in conflictive relationships and to consider their

¹³¹ Belenky et al., 15.

¹³² Cooper-White, 9.

“identity complexity” as a potentially healthy and responsive form of selfhood.¹³³ In addition, it is necessary to have “a willingness to enter the tension between various theories, recognizing that they all are fallible,” as well as valuable, in order to understand women in holistic ways.¹³⁴ In the next chapter, I focus on the spiritualities of research participants and explore the complexities, multiplicities, and “paradoxical mysteries” of Korean women’s lives and decisions by listening to their stories and respecting their life decisions based on their spiritualities.¹³⁵

¹³³ Cooper-White, 11, 17.

¹³⁴ Osmer, 103.

¹³⁵ Herbert Anderson, 196; Thomas Moore, xix.

CHAPTER 5

THE NORMATIVE TASK: PARADOXICAL AND MYSTERIOUS PRESENCE OF COMPASSIONATE SPIRITUALITY

According to the literature, one of the main reasons women remain in marriages in spite of their suffering is their love for their partners. Among my research participants, Jisu indicated love as one of her reasons for staying with her husband in spite of her suffering, while all of the research participants commonly used the Korean terms *ansreoum* (안쓰러움), *bulsangham* (불쌍함), *jeong* (정, 精), *yeonmin* (연민, 憐愍 or 憐憫), *cheukeunjisim* (측은지심, 惻隱之心), and *ja-bi* (자비, 慈悲) to describe their feelings for their spouses. These Korean terms have similar meanings and implications, as shown by the translations of these words based on the YBM Korean-English dictionary online:

ansreoum (안쓰러움) : feel sorry and uneasy; pity
bulsangham (불쌍함): poor; pitiable; pitiful; piteous; miserable; wretched; pathetic; touching
jeong (정): feeling(s); sentient; emotion(s); heart; human nature; pity; compassion
yeonmin (연민, 憐愍 or 憐憫): compassion; pity; mercy; commiseration; poor; pitiful; piteous; miserable; wretched; pathetic; touching
cheukeunjisim (측은지심, 惻隱之心): pity; compassion; commiseration; sympathy
ja-bi (자비, 慈悲): mercy; benevolence; compassion; pity; charity¹

In addition, these Korean terms have been translated into English words (mainly “compassion,” “pity,” or “mercy”) that have similar meanings or implications in their definitions based on the Merriam-Webster online dictionary:

Compassion: “a feeling of wanting to help someone who is sick, hungry, in trouble, etc.”; “sympathetic consciousness of others’ distress together with a desire to alleviate it”²

¹ The dictionary was accessed at YBM Sisa.com, <http://ybmallinall.com>.

² Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, s.v. “compassion,” 2015, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/compassion>.

Pity: “a strong feeling of sadness or sympathy for someone or something”;
“sympathetic sorrow for one suffering, distressed, or unhappy”³

Mercy: “kind or forgiving treatment of someone who could be treated harshly”;
“compassion or forbearance shown especially to an offender or to one subject to
one’s power”⁴

As a result, in many cases, the words compassion, pity, and mercy have been similarly understood and sometimes interchangeably used to describe the meanings of *ansreoum*, *bulsangham*, *jeong*, *yeonmin*, and *cheukeunjisim* in Korean contemporary society. In this chapter, which engages in the normative task, I look deeply into the meanings and roles of women’s feelings for their spouses and their compassionate spirituality based on the concept of *jeong* in the Korean context. The normative task raises the question, “What ought to be going on?” and aims (1) to interpret “particular episodes, situations, or contexts” by using theological concepts; (2) to find “ethical principles, guidelines, and rules that are relevant to the situation and can guide strategies of action;” and (3) to learn from “past and present practices of the Christian tradition” in order to provide normative guidance.⁵ In other words, this chapter presents philosophical, cultural, and theological reflections on compassionate spirituality and aims to reveal the paradoxical, mysterious presence of compassionate spirituality and the complexities of women’s identities as active, radical agents dealing with marital conflicts, abuse, or violence.

Compassionate Spirituality and *Jeong* in the Korean Context

When it comes to research participants’ feelings for their spouses, their expressions of *ansreoum*, *bulsangham*, *jeong*, *yeonmin*, and *cheukeunjisim* for their

³ Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, s.v. “pity,” 2015, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pity>.

⁴ Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, s.v. “mercy,” 2015, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mercy>.

⁵ Osmer, 4, 8.

husbands might be understood as their love for their spouses, since much of the literature on domestic violence has indicated love as one of women's reasons for remaining in marriages in spite of their suffering. However, it would be more accurate to consider research participants' expressions as being related to compassion rather than love, based on the meanings of their Korean expressions. In addition, Julie stated explicitly that her feelings are different from love, and the other research participants, with the exception of Jisu, never used the word love (*sarang*) in describing their feelings for their husbands.

In *Struggle to be the Sun Again*, Chung Hyun Kyung, a Korean feminist theologian, indicates that one of the important characteristics found in reflecting on the experiences and spiritualities of Asian women, including Korean women, is their feelings for others.⁶ In their everyday lives, Asian women feel for others based on their relationship-oriented and "community-oriented" spiritualities.⁷ Chung also describes Asian women's spirituality as "lived theology, theology in context," in that women's feelings for others have been developed by their "living experiences" in dealing with their struggles with various forms of oppression in their own contexts.⁸ Asian women have often suffered in their own contexts, not only in experiencing wars, invasions, and cruel exploitation by foreign powers, but also under the patriarchal familial, social, religious, and/or cultural structures. Their personal and social experiences with their common struggles have resulted in them sharing similarities in their life stories and spiritualities.

⁶ Chung, *Struggle to be the Sun Again*, 91. Chung describes seven characteristics of Asian women's "emerging spirituality": (1) concrete and total; (2) creative and flexible; (3) prophetic and historical; (4) community oriented; (5) pro-life; (6) ecumenical, all embracing; and (7) cosmic, creation-centered. Chung, 92-96.

⁷ Chung, 93.

⁸ Chung, 89.

Some Asian feminist theologians and Korean feminist theologians call their spirituality, “compassionate spirituality,” and they interpret it in relation to “female sexuality,” “their motherhood function,” or women’s experiences of “giving birth, caring for, and nurturing their children and family.”⁹ The experiences of women in giving life and providing space for life allow women to feel for others and to believe that a person might be able to live through them.¹⁰ In addition, based on their compassionate spirituality, Asian women, including some Korean women, actively accept their suffering and work not only for their own liberation, but also for others’ liberation.¹¹ While Asian women’s spirituality is criticized because it has been nourished by their understandings of their self-image and the gender-biased roles assigned to them by patriarchal society, Mary John Mananzan states that Asian women’s spirituality has been developed by their own personal, interpersonal, and social relationships and experiences with others in their struggles.¹² As described by Chung, their “living experiences” and their “lived theology, theology in context” are related to their spirituality that feels for others.¹³

The Korean-American feminist theologian Wonhee Anne Joh, whose work we have engaged in previous chapters, similarly points out that for Korean women, the recognition of the self is done in relation to the other, which she calls “collaborative

⁹ Chung, 89. Examples of the literature regarding Asian women’s spirituality are following: Marianne Katoppo, *Compassionate and Free: An Asian Women’s Theology* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1979); Virginia Fabella and Mercy Amba Oduyoye, eds. *With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986); Jung Ha Kim, “The Labor of Compassion: Voices of Churched Korean American Women,” in *New Spiritual Homes: Religion and Asian Americans*, ed. David K. Yoo (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999).

¹⁰ Mary John Mananzan and Sun Ai Park, “Emerging Spirituality of Asian Women,” in *With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology*, ed. Virginia Fabella and Mercy Amba Oduyoye (New York: Orbis Books, 1986), 82.

¹¹ Chung, 91.

¹² Mananzan and Park, 83-84.

¹³ Chung, 89.

compassion,” as discussed in the literature review.¹⁴ According to Joh, the practice of compassion or collaborative compassion blurs “modern dichotomies” between self and others and between abusers and victims, and it also includes abusers as the objects of compassion.¹⁵ Joh argues that the aim of collaborative compassion is not “to maintain the status quo or to perpetuate oppression,” but “to work toward emancipatory praxis for all.”¹⁶ The descriptions of Chung and Joh resonate with the RCT perspective in that RCT criticizes the concepts of a “separate self” as unrealistic and asserts that women’s inclination for relationship could be considered women’s strength rather than their weakness.¹⁷

In particular, Joh reconstructs Korean women’s compassionate spirituality based on the concept of *jeong*. Joh explains how Korean women resolve pain and suffering through the practice of *jeong*. *Jeong* unfolds its Chinese character, whose meaning is “derived mainly from the notions of heart, clarity, and vulnerability.”¹⁸ As described in the literature review, Joh states,

Jeong connotes agape, eros, and filial love with the compassion, empathy, solidarity, and understanding that emerges between connected hearts. While acknowledging that oppression engenders polarizations, the way of *jeong* entails radical inclusivity and mutuality in the work toward emancipation, for *jeong* contests relationships and realities that uphold dichotomous views. *Jeong* is the power of eros that forges its presence in the interval between the Self and the Other. It thus blurs the sharply constructed boundary between the Self and the Other while allowing one to move beyond the edges of the Self into the Other and vice versa. *Jeong* is a supplement that comes into the interstitial site of relationality.¹⁹

¹⁴ Joh, “The Transgressive Power of *Jeong*,” 155.

¹⁵ Joh, 152.

¹⁶ Joh, 155.

¹⁷ Jordan, *Relational-Cultural Therapy*, 9-10.

¹⁸ Joh, 156.

¹⁹ Joh, 152-153.

Based on Joh's descriptions, *jeong* appears to exist in the "in-between space created by the juxtaposition of *han* and love" or "the interstitial space"; therefore, *jeong* challenges or blurs "the boundaries between the self and the other" and implies "the paradoxical and ambiguous space" between hatred and love.²⁰ *Jeong* also implies "agape, eros, and filial love with the compassion, empathy, solidarity, and understanding that emerges between connected hearts," along with "vulnerability and forgiveness."²¹

In addition, *Jeong* is not always based on mutual relationship, because it exists in all types of human relationships, such as those between a father and child (*bu-jeong*), a mother and child (*mo-jeong*), teachers and students (*sajae-jeong*), lovers (*ae-jeong*), friends (*wu-jeong*), and human beings (*in-jeong* or *dong-jeong*).²² Furthermore, *jeong* can arise from two different relationships, *goun-jeong*, emerge "within mutual and satisfactory relationships," and *miun-jeong*, emerge "out of and in spite of relationships full of discontent," and it implies the coexistence of love and hate.²³ Compassion for difficult people in families or workplaces can be understood through the practice of *miun-jeong*, which implies that *jeong* often arises in "*han*-ridden relationship." Some Koreans say, "it is better to have *miun-jeong* than no *jeong*."²⁴

²⁰ Joh, 153; Wonhee Anne Joh, *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 64.

²¹ Joh, "Transgressive Power of *Jeong*," 152. Wonhee Anne Joh, "Violence and Asian American Experience: From Abjection to *Jeong*," in *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North American Women's Religion and Theology*, ed. Rita Nakashima Brock et al. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 146.

²² Joh explains *in-jeong* (genuine feeling for human beings), *bu-jeong* (fathers' affectionate feelings toward their children), *mo-jeong* (mothers' affectionate feelings toward their children), *goeun-jeong* (feelings of affection in a mutual relationship), and *mieun-jeong* (feelings of love and hate in an antagonistic relationship) in *Off the Menu*, 156.

²³ In her article, "The Transgressive Power of *Jeong*," in *Postcolonial Theologies*, 155, the meanings of *mi-eun jeong* and *go-eun jeong* are incorrectly reversed. They are correctly explained in her article, "Violence and Asian American Experience," in *Off the Menu*, 156, and her book, *Heart of the Cross* (122-23).

²⁴ Joh, *Heart of Cross*, 123, cited in Yohan Ka, "Jeong-han as a Korean Culture-Based Narcissism: Dealing with *Jeong-Han* through *Jeong-Dynamics*," *Pastoral Psychology* 59 (2010): 229.

Some research participants indicated that their feelings of compassion were related to *jeong*. For Sevin, her feeling of *ansreoum* can be understood as *in-jeong* or *dong-jeong*, since she felt genuine feeling for her husband as a human being who got sick, even before she became a faithful Christian. After she felt *ansreoum* for her husband, Sevin mentioned that she stopped thinking of divorce and endured the difficulties of taking care of her husband using her own volition. For Hanna, her feelings of *ansreoum*, *bulsangham*, and *cheukeunjisim* are also considered to be related to *in-jeong* and *dong-jeong*, since she mentioned that she felt compassion not only for her husband, but also for everyone she has known, such as her parents and friends. Even though she became separated from her husband, she said that she still felt *jeong* and compassion for him as a human being because of the time she had spent with him.

In the cases of Julie and Jisu, they used the terms *jeong*, *miun-jeong*, and *goun-jeong* as well as *ansreoum*, *bulsangham*, *yeonmin*, and/or *cheukeunjisim* in order to describe their feelings for their spouses. Julie and Jisu particularly revealed their mixed feelings, such as *miun-jeong* and *goun-jeong*, saying that their feelings are “paradoxical” because of the coexistence of love and hate. Julie mentioned that her feelings are different from love since she felt hatred as well, and Jisu indicated various elements in her feelings. According to Jisu, her feelings are related to her personal love and religious teachings and also originate from genuine love or “*agape* love” toward human beings, which is similar to the concepts of *in-jeong* and *dong-jeong* found in her mother’s and grandmother’s generations. In addition, Jisu implied that her feelings are related to motherhood experiences, since she felt maternal toward her husband.

In addition, Jina, Julie, Jisu, Hanna, and Mia pointed out that their feelings of

compassion and *jeong* based on their expressions of *ansreoum*, *bulsangham*, *yeonmin*, and/or *cheukeunjisim* are based on their “understandings” of their husbands’ personalities in relation to their poor childhoods in disturbed families. These research participants’ continuous efforts not only to recover or reconnect their relationships with their husbands, but also to keep their families together, have caused them to look for reasons for both their marital conflicts and their husbands’ abusive language and behaviors, and they have found their husbands’ pain and suffering to be rooted in their husbands’ lives. Seeing pain and suffering in their husbands helps them understand their husbands and feel compassion for them as beings or the oppressed who have suffered. Their understanding helps to cross or blur “the borders” or boundaries between themselves as victims and their husbands as abusers and change their perceptions of their husbands, to be able to see them as victims or wounded persons, not only as abusers. Their understanding leads them to the conclusion that their husbands are wounded abusers in a sense. Therefore, for research participants, community-oriented and compassionate spirituality in relation to the Korean concept of *jeong* is an important aspect of understanding women’s consciousness, their ways of dealing with their difficulties, and their decision-making processes. In particular, research participants’ feelings of compassion in relation to *jeong* facilitates understanding their agency, vocations, and hope for transformation and reconciliation in their marital relationships, which will be discussed in the following sections.

Compassion and Jeong: Emotion, Reason, and Faith

Research participants’ feelings of compassion and *jeong* might be criticized by some scholars who consider their feelings as irrational or their decisions as passively

accepting their reality based on their feelings for their spouses. Since women's love for their spouses has been criticized by some scholars as a "traumatic bond" and a pathological love, some might think that research participants' compassion and *jeong* for their husbands prevented them from leaving their conflictive and abusive relationships.²⁵ In addition, their practices of compassion in their situations can be seen as perpetuating their situations and resulting in more suffering for them. In Western philosophical history, the prolonged arguments on the meanings, motivations for, and validity of compassion, mercy, and pity—words that have been interchangeably used by people—shed light on why some scholars have criticized women's love or compassion.

Oliver Davies, in *A Theology of Compassion*, states that scholars in the philosophical tradition have been divided into two camps concerning the concept of compassion: those who argue that compassion is "a matter of feeling" or emotion, which is irrational, and those who assert that compassion contains "a cognitive dimension," which is "a form of reason."²⁶ According to Davies, this division was originally based on "two classes of the words" to denote what compassion means. The first class contains the English word *compassion*, which conveys the notion of "fellow-suffering" or "suffering with," and is related to the Latin words *commiseratio* and *compassio*, the Greek words συμπάθεια (συμπαθεῖν) and συμπάχειν, and the German word *Mitleid*.²⁷ The second class of words includes the English words mercy and pity, the Latin words *clementia*, *misericordia*, *humanitas*, and *pietas*, the Greek words ἔλεος and οἶκτος, and the French

²⁵ Martin, 40.

²⁶ Oliver Davies, *A Theology of Compassion: Metaphysics of Difference and the Renewal of Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001), 233.

²⁷ Davies, 234.

word *pitie*.²⁸ Even though the words compassion, pity, and mercy have similar meanings and have been used interchangeably, some philosophical and theological scholars have tried to make distinctions between these words by differentiating the meanings and motivations connoted by them throughout the history of philosophy.

Plato understood pity as a feeling or even “an irrational feeling or passion,” that is “undesirable” because it conflicts with “justice and reason,” as shown by characters such as Oedipus, Electra, and Philoctetes.²⁹ In contrast, in *Poetics* and *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle found pity to have “a cognitive and an affective dimension.”³⁰ Recalling Plato’s position, the Stoics indicated that mercy (*clementia*) was “the inclination of the mind towards leniency in the exacting of punishment” and was considered to be “combined with reason.”³¹ However, for the Stoics, pity (*misericordia*) was considered “a weakness of the mind” due to its “disassociation from reason”; they thought “pity regards the plight, not the cause of it.”³² Thus, Plato and the Stoics treated pity as an undesirable feeling in that it was contrasted with reason, and mercy was a desirable feeling having a cognitive aspect.

Thomas Aquinas also made a distinction between pity and compassion or mercy. For him, pity was “solely an emotional response to another’s distress” and could not be a virtue, while compassion or mercy comes with “the will, the rational desire,” to act on

²⁸ Davies, 234.

²⁹ Plato, *Republic* 607a, *Plato the Republic*, trans. Paul Shorey, v. 2 (Loeb, London: Heinemann, 1935), 465. Cited in Davies, 234.

³⁰ Aristotle, *Poetics*, c.6, 1449b, trans. James Hutton (London and New York: Norton 1982), 50; Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, II, c. 8, 1385b, trans. George A. Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 152. Cited in Davies, 234-35.

³¹ Davies, 235.

³² Davies, 235.

emotions regarding others' suffering and thus could be a virtue.³³ According to Aquinas, pity can lead to "more harm than good," while compassion or mercy, as a virtue, conveys "choice" about a person's actions.³⁴ In other words, his argument rested on whether these could be seen as mere emotions that can cause problems or whether they had rational and action components to them. For Aquinas, compassion is understood as a virtue that involves the will and action.

Beginning in the eighteenth century, according to Davies, the roles of sympathy and pity were reviewed and adopted as social virtues. For instance, Adam Smith considered sympathy "the social bond between people" that reminded them of "the moral level of the Stoic principle of cosmic sympathy as the organic harmony of world-order."³⁵ However, Smith's main interest lay more with "the social effects of sympathy as a form of cognition of others' states of mind" than with the feeling itself.³⁶ Also, in the middle of the eighteenth century, Jean-Jacques Rousseau brought attention to pity as serving "a crucial role in the development of the moral base of personhood."³⁷ Therefore, from the eighteenth century on, the notion of pity was changed from an undesirable emotion to a social virtue.

Immanuel Kant, generally considered a radical rationalist, privileges "rationality over affectivity in the compassionate moment" in his discussion of *Mitleid* in *Ethische*

³³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologia*, trans. the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981), II-II, q. 30, a. 3. Cited in Judith Barad, "The Understanding and Experience of Compassion: Aquinas and the Dalai Lama," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 27 (2007): 16.

³⁴ Aquinas, II-II, q. 30, a. 3. Cited in Barad, 16.

³⁵ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. David D. Raphael and Alexander L. Macfie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 9. Cited in Davies, 236.

³⁶ Smith, 10, 16-19. Cited in Davies, 236.

³⁷ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile or On Education*, trans. Allan Bloom (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), 221-223. Cited by Davies, 237.

Elementarlehre.³⁸ Kant distinguishes between *humanitas practica* as “a sharing of each other’s feelings which is rooted in a free choice of the will,” and *humanitas aesthetica* as “a sensitivity towards common feelings... which comes from nature itself.”³⁹ For Kant, the former was “a free act” considered “*teilnehmend*” (“participatory” or “a sharing in”), and the latter was called “*ansteckend*” (“infectious”).⁴⁰ According to Kant, “to act from feeling or mercy (*Barmherzigkeit*)” rather than “*pfllicht* or duty” should not happen because it will increase suffering.⁴¹ Friedrich Nietzsche’s view on compassion is similar to Kant’s in that Nietzsche refers to compassion as “*eine Ansteckung* or infection,” and insists that “suffering is spread through compassion.”⁴² For Nietzsche, compassion is “a sin” and “a form of self-indulgence”; therefore, “the overcoming of compassion is to be counted among the higher virtues.”⁴³ Thus, some scholars, especially Enlightenment thinkers, minimize the role of emotions when they discuss the meanings of or motivations for compassion, mercy, and pity.⁴⁴

Some contemporary scholars, such as James Gilman and Lawrence Blum, argue that Kant’s view of the role of emotions, including compassion, was often “ignored or

³⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Die Metaphysik der Sitten*, in *Werke*, hg. Benzion Kellermann, Bd VII (Hildesheim: Verlag Dr. H. A. Gerstenberg, 1973), 270-71. Cited in Davies, 237.

³⁹ Kant, 270-71. Cited in Davies, 237.

⁴⁰ Kant, 270-71. Cited in Davies, 237.

⁴¹ Kant, 270-71. Cited in Davies, 237.

⁴² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Der Antichrist*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), 7. Cited in Davies, 238.

⁴³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), 4. Cited in Davies, 238-39.

⁴⁴ James Gilman, *Faith, Reason, and Compassion: A Philosophy of the Christian Faith*. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 7. “The Enlightenment is a movement to which the word ‘rationalism’ might be fairly but cautiously ascribed, especially to certain thinkers in France (d’Alembert, d’Holbach, Voltaire, Condorcet), England (Locke, Hume), and Germany (Leibniz, Kant) who placed a great deal of trust in the power of reason and scientific inquiry and education.” Gilman, 7.

misunderstood” as Kant rejecting or denying emotions.⁴⁵ According to Gilman, Kant argued in his *Lectures on Ethics* that the emotions play a vital role in ethics by “shaping a character able to fulfill his rational duty.”⁴⁶ Kant’s objection was to “any ethic based on emotional preferences” or “passionate attachments” which would lend themselves to “self-interested inclinations and personal preferences that detract from loving neighbors with equal regard.”⁴⁷ In interpreting the story of the man of wealth in the Bible, Kant argued that “commanded love” or “mandated love of neighbor” is not “pathological love,” but “practical love,” which “resides in the will and not in the propensities of feeling, in principles of action and not in tender sympathy.”⁴⁸ In addition, he insisted that commanded love does not mean that “a person should have a feeling for” others.⁴⁹ Therefore, this mandated love does not consist of “inclinations,”⁵⁰ but involves “a determination of the will.”⁵¹ Even though Kant excluded irrational, emotional attachments, according to Gilman, Kant acknowledged that it is possible for people to come to feel for others when they perform their duties, and even insisted that “emotions are important for nurturing a character disposed toward carrying out the duties of that life.”⁵² As a result, Kant can be considered as encouraging the cultivation of emotions as

⁴⁵ James Gilman, *Fidelity of Heart: An Ethic of Christian Virtue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 43; Gilman, *Faith, Reason, and Compassion*, 7; Lawrence Blum, “Compassion,” in *Explaining Emotions*, ed. Amelie Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

⁴⁶ Gilman, *Faith, Reason, and Compassion*, 14.

⁴⁷ Gilman, *Fidelity of Heart*, 43; Green, 163.

⁴⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959), 15-16. Cited in Gilman, *Fidelity of Heart*, 43.

⁴⁹ Gilman, 43; Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 15-16.

⁵⁰ Gilman, 43.

⁵¹ Dana Radcliffe, “Compassion and Commanded Love,” *Faith and Philosophy* 11, no. 2 (1992): 50-71. Cited in Gilman, 41.

⁵² Gilman, 44. Gilman’s argument is based on the arguments by Ronald Green, “Kant on Christian Love” in *The Love Commandments: Essays in Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy*, ed. Edmund Santurri and William Werpehowski (Washington, DD: Georgetown University Press, 1959), 261-66 and Radcliffe, 50-55.

“an indirect duty.”⁵³ Even though Gilman argues that Kant did not entirely neglect emotions and their roles in moral life, for Kant, compassion was still considered to be secondary because practicing duties without inclination has to be the primary motive; emotions can come later to help one perform duties effectively.

While Kant did not consider compassion a primary motive for ethical action, Lawrence Blum argues that compassion can be a primary motive if there is no “identity confusion.”⁵⁴ For Blum, compassion is “a complex emotional attitude” toward others and involves “imaginative dwelling on the condition of the other person, an active regard for his good, a view of him as a fellow human being, and emotional responses of a certain degree of intensity.”⁵⁵ Imaginatively reconstructing someone’s condition is distinct from a type of “identification” with others that fails to distinguish one’s feelings and situation from others’.⁵⁶ For Blum, identification that is based on “identity confusion” is considered a pathological condition, while identification based on having similar experiences promotes compassion and is not a pathological condition because there is no identity confusion involved.⁵⁷

In addition, Blum indicates that compassion is “not always linked so directly to the prompting of beneficent actions” because performing beneficent acts is sometimes impossible or inappropriate.⁵⁸ He notes that “compassion can also be misguided, grounded in superficial understanding of a situation. Compassion is not necessarily wise or appropriate.”⁵⁹ Therefore, Blum concludes his argument by emphasizing that

⁵³ Gilman, 44.

⁵⁴ Blum, 509-10.

⁵⁵ Blum, 509.

⁵⁶ Blum, 509.

⁵⁷ Blum, 509-10.

⁵⁸ Blum, 515-16.

⁵⁹ Blum, 516.

compassion has to be carried out with “a deeper understanding of a situation,” rather than on the basis of emotion or rationality alone. Even though Blum insists that compassion can be a motive to act, he echoes some of Kant’s argument, in that emotions, including compassion, that lack reasoning or primary motives to act can mislead people in performing their action. For Kant, emotions can only be acceptable if they work secondarily, following after duties or commanded love, and for Blum, compassion is appropriate only if it is accompanied by reasoning.

In reflecting on these arguments, if research participants’ compassion for their spouses is considered to be a mere emotion, their feelings of compassion and *jeong* could be criticized because reasoning is not involved, in the same way Plato, the Stoics, and Kant downplayed emotions that lacked a rational component. Their practices of compassion in their situations can be seen as resulting in more suffering, as discussed by Aquinas and Nietzsche, and also can be understood as pathological due to “possible identity confusion” and “superficial understanding[s] of a situation,” as argued by Blum.⁶⁰ Since compassion and *jeong* are considered to be based on a community orientation or blurring of the boundaries between self and other, research participants’ compassion and *jeong* as feelings can be assessed as pathological.⁶¹

Applying the arguments of Aquinas, Smith, and Kant, it is also possible to understand research participants’ compassion and *jeong* as virtues or duties. Several research participants—Sevin, Jina, Julie, Jisu, Hanna, and Mia—used the terms “responsibility,” “duty,” “obligation,” or “volition” along with their feelings for their spouses as reasons for living with their husbands or as important traits for couples to

⁶⁰ Blum, 509-10, 516.

⁶¹ Blum, 509-10, 516.

exercise in their marriages. In other words, research participants' understandings of responsibility, duty, and obligation were sometimes expressed in relation to their emotions for their spouses, while their expressions reflected a sense of virtue or duty based on their personal beliefs, life philosophies, or religious teachings and beliefs. Since *jeong* is considered to be "a Korean cultural-bound emotion," if a person is considered to have a lack of *jeong* or have no *jeong* (*moo-jeong*) by Korean society, that person can be thought to be selfish.⁶² Again, to repeat the well-known Korean saying: "It is better to have *miun-jeong* than no *jeong*."⁶³ Therefore, practicing *jeong* can be understood as a virtue or duty for people to carry out.

In addition, compassion and mercy are advocated and taught as significant values and virtues in Christianity, and some research participants presented that their compassion has a strong connection with their religious beliefs. For Sevin, Jisu, Mia, and Nami, their religious beliefs played important roles in dealing with their marital conflicts and relationships. Their strong beliefs in God and religious teachings seem to have strongly influenced their reasoning on marital and relational values and the concepts of duty and obligation. In particular, Sevin, Jisu, Mia, and Nami indicated that the biblical stories about Jesus, the love of God, and the biblical teaching to "love your enemies" have influenced their decision-making processes and helped them to understand the meaning of their lives and sufferings; thus, they might consider compassion a duty, virtue, and/or obligation based on their religious teachings and try to practice it as faithful Christians. As presented, for some, their religious belief or Christian faith is considered to have a priority in their lives. This perspective is also argued for by some scholars in their

⁶² Ka, 221.

⁶³ Joh, *Heart of Cross*, 123, Cited in Ka, 229.

discussions of compassion. According to Gilman, for Tertullian and Kierkegaard, “religious beliefs are incompatible with reason’s demand for justification and evidence” because “super-rational, mystical experiences transcend categories of reason.”⁶⁴ Gilman also indicated that St. Augustine presents a view that “faith and reason are interdependent,” and “faith precedes reason” rather than contrasting with it.⁶⁵ Based on this observation, for some, compassion is considered as incomparable to reason or seen as prior to reason.

Whether research participants’ compassion is based on their emotions, personal beliefs, life philosophies, or religious beliefs, their compassion and *jeong* can be understood as virtues, duties, or obligations that they carry out. However, in applying the arguments of Aquinas, Smith, and Kant, their compassion and *jeong* as feelings have to be secondary to performing duties or functioning as rational virtues in order to be acceptable. Even though Aquinas, Smith, and Kant draw attention to the aspect that compassion as well as mercy and pity as virtues or duties incorporate reasoning and decision-making processes for action, they still underestimate compassion as a feeling and advocate for a reasoning component in performing compassion. In addition, even though Tertullian and St. Augustine presented the interdependency of faith and reason, they placed faith prior to reason.

In this extended discussion, we have seen that historically scholars have defined compassion differently, either as an irrational emotion or as an emotion involving reasoning, and they have evaluated it differently, either as being pathological or desirable as a virtue or duty. Some scholars have included the aspects of religious beliefs and faith

⁶⁴ Gilman, *Faith, Reason, and Compassion*, 5.

⁶⁵ Gilman, 6.

in their discussions of compassion, while some have added a volitional dimension for action. These arguments imply that research participants' compassion and *jeong* can be evaluated variously, depending on whether scholars understand compassion as merely an emotion, an emotion including reasoning, or a faith practice, whether they consider emotion, reason, and faith as separate or not, and whether they think one is superior to the others. One important aspect found in their arguments is that their discussions are based on dichotomies, such as either emotion or reason and either reason or faith, and they ignore the fact that all these aspects are interdependent and interrelated in human beings as entities and influence each other in individuals' decision-making processes. In other words, it is hard to determine that one element is operating by itself and which element comes first, since each is accompanied by the others in spite of different individual emphases on reason, emotion, and faith.

For this reason, I agree with the perspective of Davies who, in *Theology of Compassion*, applies the argument of Martha Nussbaum when he asserts that compassion is "a human condition which is constituted by the simultaneous interplay of cognitive, affective, and volitional dimensions."⁶⁶ Continuing on, he states, "In compassion, we see another's distress (cognition), we feel moved by it (affectivity) and we actively seek to remedy it (volition)."⁶⁷ Based on Davies' arguments, compassion without the affective, volitional, or cognitive dimension cannot be considered compassion, since compassion combines all three dimensions. In addition, Davies mentions that compassion is "not in itself a virtue"; rather it is "a kenotic or agapic state of mind which precipitates in

⁶⁶ Davies, 18; Martha Nussbaum, "Compassion: The Basic Social Emotion," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 13, no. 1 (1996): 27-58.

⁶⁷ Davies, 18.

virtuous acts,” which is similar to the Korean concept of *jeong*.⁶⁸ Compassion and *jeong* convey an aspect of virtue, but they cannot be considered virtues in and of themselves, rather, they are states of mind consisting of the interconnected relationships of cognition, affectivity, volition, and other aspects that cannot be understood by dichotomies or segmented understandings of the human condition and being.

Sang Jin Choi, a Korean male psychologist, also defines *jeong* as “a comprehensive experience which includes emotion, cognition, attitude, words, and concrete behaviors/ practices.”⁶⁹ Kyoo Hoon Oh, a Korean male practical/pastoral theologian, finds emotional, moral, and behavioral aspects in *jeong* as a result of his research on *jeong* in the Korean church.⁷⁰ A Korean Christian feels for others, considers it a moral value and duty, and practices it, for example, by sharing material goods with others. Since the interviewees for his research were Christians, it is possible that their understandings of *jeong* were related to religious teachings as well.

Choi and Oh also draw attention to “time” and “space” as important aspects in understanding *jeong*. In order to feel a strong level of *jeong*, people need to have a “continuity of interpersonal interactions over time” and also have “close physical and emotional contacts in the same space.”⁷¹ As for my research participants, they have lived with their husbands more than ten, twenty, or thirty years. Jina’s comment, “I had three children, met him when I was 23, and had *miun-jeong* and *goun-jeong* ... Even though he was not good in some respects, that was not all there was,” reveals the importance of

⁶⁸ Davies, 18.

⁶⁹ Sang Jin Choi, *한국인의 심리학 [Korean psychology]* (Seoul: Chung Ang University Press, 2000), 50. Cited in Ka, 229.

⁷⁰ Kyoo Hoon Oh, *정과 한국교회 [Jeong and Korean Church]* (Seoul: Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary Press, 2011), 213, 247, 275.

⁷¹ Choi, 50-51. Cited in Ka, 229; Oh, 91.

shared times and spaces between married couples and the importance of time and space to understanding *jeong*. In addition, Choi indicates that *jeong* can be understood as “personality/character” and “strong love towards an object/person.”⁷² Some persons can have more *jeong* and compassion for others and consider it as part of their personality or character. Among my research participants, Jisu and Hanna particularly indicated their personalities and tendencies toward being caring and compassionate.

As discussed by Davies as well as Choi and Oh, the research participants revealed that compassion and *jeong* represent comprehensive experiences, including emotional, moral, and behavioral aspects. Their feelings are related to their reasoning and decision-making processes, despite the different levels of emphasis on each aspect depending on the individuals. In addition, as discussed in Chapter 4, their compassion and *jeong* toward their husbands are strongly connected to their courage, agency, and actions in coping with their marital conflicts, abuse, and violence, their vocations to sustain their families, their hopes for their husbands to change, and their perspectives on life and suffering. Therefore, research participants’ compassion and *jeong* have to be understood as complicated human states consisting of cognitive, affective, volitional, and other dimensions that interact, rather than be criticized as irrational emotions. In the next section, the paradoxical and mysterious existence of being and compassion as aspects of spirituality are discussed to understand research participants’ compassionate spirituality.

Being and Compassion as Spirituality

While compassion and *jeong* have been simply considered forms of love that might be considered traumatic and pathological in some scholarly literature, research

⁷² Choi, 36. Cited in Ka, 229.

participants revealed their compassion and *jeong* as comprehensive experiences including emotional, moral, behavioral, and other aspects. Greenspun and Goldner et al. use the terms “relational bond” and “mysterious stickiness” to describe women’s love for their partners.⁷³ According to Goldner et al., the mysterious relational bond needs to be explored and understood when reflecting on “the quixotic juxtapositions of love and hate, control and dependency, remorse and cynicism, and change and no change” in couples’ relationships.⁷⁴ While these authors do not specifically describe the condition of “quixotic juxtapositions of love and hate,” this state could be understood as one of “coexisting streams of feeling” love and hate in a marital relationship, as Israel Charny has indicated.⁷⁵ While love and marriage have been idealized, some scholars, including Robert Johnson, Israel Charny and George Bach, have paid attention to the inevitable coexistence of love and hate in marital relationships. Charny refers to marriage as “an inherently tense, conflict-ridden interpersonal system,” and Bach refers to marital partners as “intimate enemies,” who may, in extreme cases, end their relationships by killing their partners.⁷⁶ In a sense, “intimacy and conflict are inseparable in human life,” even though intimate violence is not acceptable.⁷⁷

Relational “stickiness” can be described using the Korean term *jeong*, especially *mieun-jeong*. Julie and Jisu particularly expressed their mixed feelings, such as *miun-jeong* and *goun-jeong*, for their husbands. As described, *jeong* refers to a relational attachment, bond, or stickiness between individuals and appears to exist in the “in-

⁷³ Goldner et al, 9; Greenspun, 157.

⁷⁴ Goldner et al., 2.

⁷⁵ Charny, 10.

⁷⁶ Charny, 5.

⁷⁷ Charny, 5.

between space” that challenges or blurs the “boundary between the self and the other.”⁷⁸

Among the many usages of *jeong*, *mieun-jeong*, which means feelings of love and hate in an antagonistic relationship, could be used to understand “the paradoxical and ambiguous space” of love and hate in marital relationships.⁷⁹ In experiencing marital conflicts, abuse, and/or violence, research participants indicated that they felt *jeong* and *mieun-jeong* toward their husbands. For all the research participants except for Hanna, *jeong* and *mieun jeong* inspired them to not give up on their abusive relationships because they recognized “the brokenness and pain” of their abusive partners.⁸⁰

Compassionate- and *jeong*-based decisions could raise controversial issues, since compassion and *jeong* motivates women to accept their abusive partners and endure their suffering in hopes that their abusers will change.⁸¹ However, acknowledging and respecting compassion and *jeong* helps to recognize the paradoxes and mysteries of human minds, human connectedness and relationality, and “the complex and dynamic nature” of human beings and relationships.⁸² In other words, compassion and *jeong* cannot be comprehended through perspectives based on “modern dichotomies of self/other, oppressor/oppressed, and male/female,” but should be understood through acknowledging that “human beings grow though and toward connection” throughout their lives, as RCT would affirm.⁸³

In addition, drawing on Davies’ ontological statements, being needs to be grasped as “the medium of relation between self and other,” and “the language of being is the

⁷⁸ Joh, “Transgressive Power of *Jeong*,” 153.

⁷⁹ Joh, “Violence and Asian American Experience,” 146. 156.

⁸⁰ Joh, “Violence and Asian American Experience,” 156.

⁸¹ Joh, 153.

⁸² Joh, 146-147.

⁸³ Joh, 152; Jordan, 1.

thinking of that relation.”⁸⁴ Davies argues that “being is thought not beyond or above difference, but rather within difference,” and compassion is the most intensive form of “intersubjectivity,” interweaving self and other.⁸⁵

If intersubjectivity is the interweaving of self and other, then its most intensive form is compassion. In compassion the self experiences the other primordially, not as a “second subject” whose own experiences are to be exploited for our own pleasures ... but as another who suffers and whose suffering—against any perceivable self-interest or motivation of the self—become not our own, since they are always recognized as being the suffering of another, but become the cause of our action as if they were our own. It is natural for us to seek to escape from pain, but in compassionate acts we expose ourselves to the possibility of suffering by acting on behalf of another whose suffering nevertheless remains their suffering and not ours. In the compassionate moment we acknowledge ... the deep sociality of consciousness in the embrace of a dialectical mutuality of self and other.⁸⁶

Experiences of mysterious being and compassion as forms of intersubjectivity can be considered “supersymmetrical” experiences, applying Gilman’s perspective on compassion. Gilman insists that compassion plays an important role in solving philosophical problems that have not been addressed or solved by rationalism (reason, symmetry) or fideism (faith, asymmetry).⁸⁷ According to Gilman, supersymmetry, as a fifth dimension, “supersedes the simple dualism (spirit/matter, God/human, self/other, grace/law, faith/reason).”⁸⁸ Therefore, Gilman’s arguments that experiences of compassion serve as a supersymmetrical principal lead to reflections on my research participants’ compassion and *jeong* as aspects of spirituality.

As indicated by Chung and Joh, compassionate spirituality has been a significant

⁸⁴ Davies, xvii.

⁸⁵ Davies, xviii-xix.

⁸⁶ Davies, xix.

⁸⁷ Gilman developed a methodology using three terms from physics: “symmetry,” “asymmetry,” and “supersymmetry.” Gilman, *Faith, Reason, and Compassion*, 11-12.

⁸⁸ Gilman, 31.

part of the lives of some Asian women, including some Korean women. My research participants also revealed that their compassion and *jeong* have played important roles in their decision-making processes and their life perspectives or philosophies. In other words, compassion has been an important element, not only as a human condition and mindset that includes various dimensions as discussed, but also as a religious/spiritual dimension. In the previous chapters, I used the words *religion*, *religious*, *spirit*, *spiritual*, and *spirituality* without differentiating one from another and often used them in combination, such as religious/spiritual, or interchangeably, because they are not mutually exclusive: for example, religion and spirituality are both associated “with internal processes and traits, as well as outward manifestations of those inner qualities.”⁸⁹ In addition, depending on individuals, these terms are understood and used differently when they explain their religious/spiritual experiences. For this reason, I prefer to use “religious/spiritual” as a combined term.

However, I understand the concepts of “spiritual/spirituality” as more inclusive than the concepts of “religious/religion” in that spiritual experiences and/or spirituality can be experienced without any religious affiliations. In other words, I am aware that religious/religion and spiritual/spirituality can be understood differently based on different definitions, and I also do not think they are the same, even though “religious/religion” and “spiritual/spirituality” are not mutually exclusive. In her discussion of resilience, Froma Walsh defined religion as “an organized, institutionalized belief system, set of practices, and faith community” and spirituality as “a dimension of human experience involving personal transcendent beliefs and practices, within or

⁸⁹ Fowler and Rountree, 2.

outside formal religion, through family and cultural heritage, and in connection with nature and humanity.”⁹⁰ Due to various criticisms of institutionalized forms of religion, some scholars and people prefer to use “spirituality” as opposed to “religion” in their discussions of religious or spiritual aspects in human beings’ lives. However, some scholars and lay people do not distinguish these terms. For example, in describing Fitchett’s spiritual assessments, Fitchett does not distinguish the term “spiritual” from similar terms, such as “spirit,” “spirituality,” and religion.

Regarding the terms, “religion,” “spirit,” and “spirituality,” I agree with the descriptions John Swinton gives of them in his book, *Spirituality and Mental Health Care*.⁹¹ Swinton points out the rise of interest in spirituality in contemporary Western cultures, while institutionalized religions, including many Christian denominations, have continued to decline.⁹² I see a similar phenomenon in the Korean context, since institutionalized religions, especially Christianity, have gradually declined due to various criticisms of their institutionalized forms.

Whilst people may be becoming less religious, it would be a mistake to assume from that that they are necessarily becoming less spiritual, or that they are no longer searching for a sense of transcendence and spiritual fulfillment. What seems to have happened is that the spiritual beliefs and desires that were once located primarily within institutionalized religions have migrated across to other forms of spirituality. The spiritual quest continues, but in very different and much more diverse forms than those traditionally assumed to be normal.⁹³

According to Swinton, “spirituality” has gained diverse definitions beyond religious and institutionalized religious concepts, in spite of “common themes, such as

⁹⁰ Walsh, 5.

⁹¹ John Swinton, *Spirituality and Mental Health Care: Rediscovering a ‘Forgotten’ Dimension* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2001).

⁹² Swinton, 11.

⁹³ Swinton, 11.

God, meaning, purpose, value, and hope.”⁹⁴ He encourages holding on to “uncertainty and mystery” in discussions of spirituality because it cannot be conceptualized using human scientific language.⁹⁵ Being mindful of uncertainty and mystery, Swinton differentiates “spirit” from “spirituality” by defining the human spirit as “the essential life-force that undergirds, motivates, and vitalizes human existence” and spirituality as “the specific way in which individuals and communities respond to the experience of the spirit.”⁹⁶ According to Swinton, “spirit” has to be understood on an “ontological level” since this word is based on “the Latin *spiritus*, meaning ‘breath,’” and it plays the role of “the fundamental breath of life,” not only as “an integrative presence that permeates and vitalizes every aspect and every dimension of the human being,” but also as “an essential, dynamic life-force” that drives human beings to find “God, value, meaning, purpose, and hope.”⁹⁷ In addition, applying Emmanuel Lartey’s intercultural care model, Swinton suggests three aspects of spirituality: (1) it is “universal human experience”; (2) it is “inevitably expressed through the particular concepts of context, culture, and personality, as well as via the particular spiritual assumptions and religious traditions that exist within different cultures”; and (3) it is “a unique and deeply personal thing that people express in their own specific ways.”⁹⁸ Swinton’s understandings of “spirit” recall the meaning of “spirit” according to Clinebell and the spiritual dimensions in the spiritual assessment by Fitchett (discussed in Chapter 4), since Clinebell and Fitchett articulate spirit as “the central, integrating” dimension and emphasize its “wholeness and interconnectivity” with

⁹⁴ Swinton, 11-12.

⁹⁵ Swinton, 13.

⁹⁶ Swinton, 14.

⁹⁷ Swinton, 14, 16, 18.

⁹⁸ Swinton, 21-22.

various other dimensions of human beings.⁹⁹

As argued by Swinton, I understand spirituality as “an intra, inter, and transpersonal experience that is shaped and directed by the experiences of individuals and of the communities within which they live out their lives” and that is beyond religious and institutionalized religious concepts, in spite of similar themes and terms found in them.¹⁰⁰ For this reason, I do not consider research participants’ compassionate spirituality as only based on their religious experiences and beliefs; rather, I consider it a common phenomenon that is revealed in the research participants’ lives, whether they are Christian (Sevin, Jina, Julie, Jisu, Mia and Nami) or not Christian (Hanna). I am also mindful of the aspect that spiritual concepts or spirituality cannot be understood with human language and should be respected as a mysterious and uncertain dimension. Thus, I understand that it could be hard for some people to understand research participants’ relational stickiness, *jeong*, especially *miun-jeong*, and compassionate spirituality, which cannot be explicitly explained by human concepts and languages, in spite of the efforts of people, including scholars, to articulate these experiences. Furthermore, it is important to explore not only individual and intrapersonal particularities, but also particular contexts and cultures where individuals and religions are situated in order to understand spirituality in individuals as well as humanity in general. For this reason, it is important to understand the meaning and practice of *jeong* in the Korean context in order to reflect on research participants’ compassionate spirituality. While the roles of religion/spirituality and religious/spiritual practices have often been neglected and underestimated in the field of psychology and by mental health professionals, they are

⁹⁹ Clinebell, “Six Dimensions of Wholeness Centered in Spirit,” 9, 19; Swinton, 17.

¹⁰⁰ Swinton, 20.

significant for practical/pastoral theologians, pastoral counselors, and other helping professionals. These practitioners need to seriously consider religious/spiritual aspects so they can understand the compassionate spirituality of women like my research participants and how it has played a vital role in their decision-making processes and lives. In addition, it is important to acknowledge and respect compassion and *jeong* as a spirituality that helps women recognize the paradoxes and mysteries of human minds, human connectedness and relationality, and “the complex and dynamic nature” of human beings and relationships.¹⁰¹

Radical Compassion for Transformative Possibilities

As Joh notes, some people criticize compassionate spirituality and compassion- and *jeong*-based decisions as passive and weak methods of dealing with abusive situations.¹⁰² Women with a compassionate spirituality are viewed as passively accepting their reality, based on their compassion and *jeong*. However, some women, including my research participants, decide to stay with their husbands based on compassion and *jeong* along with other reasons, such as finances, children, or lack of self-esteem, and they do not regret their decisions as they look back on their lives. For my research participants, their compassionate spirituality and *jeong* are revealed as radical, dynamic, empowering, and transformative aspects of their lives, rather than passive forms of relating to their husbands and dealing with their difficulties.¹⁰³

In the cases of Jina, Julie, Jisu, Hanna, and Mia, their understandings of their husbands’ personalities in relation to their poor childhoods and disturbed family

¹⁰¹ Joh, “Violence and Asian American Experience,” 146-147.

¹⁰² Joh, 154.

¹⁰³ Joh, 162.

backgrounds resulted in them feeling compassion for their husbands, and they radically considered their husbands as beings who have suffered like them, thus blurring the boundaries between themselves and their husbands. In other words, seeing and understanding the pain and suffering in their husbands' lives resulted in them changing their perceptions of their husbands. Instead of seeing them as abusers, they saw them as victims or wounded persons; their understandings led them to radically consider their husbands as wounded abusers who needed care. Some research participants, such as Julie, Jisu, and Nami, showed their will or volition based on their compassion and *jeong* to care for their husbands and recover their relationships, even though they felt mixed feelings, *miun-jeong* and *goun-jeong*, for their husbands. Hanna, who has been separated from her husband, also mentioned that she would take care of her husband if her husband got sick later in life, rather than ignoring him or asking her children to take care of her husband. She would do this because of her compassion and sense of responsibility for her husband. This life attitude and spirituality are also shown by Sevin, whose compassion for her husband led her to decide not to think about getting divorced after her husband became sick.

When women have suffered because of or been oppressed by their husbands and/or in patriarchal families, for some people it would be hard to think of practicing compassion for their husbands and families. Some people would think it better for these women to stay away from their husbands and refuse to practice compassion toward them in order to have better lives for themselves. However, some Korean women's practices of compassionate spirituality and *jeong* in the midst of their suffering are considered an active and radical acceptance of and a conscious decision to cope with their difficulties

and sufferings in their conflictive and abusive relationships with their husbands. As discussed in Chapter 4, their decisions based on compassionate spirituality are also closely related to their life goals, vocations, and hopes to sustain their families and recover marital relationships. Some women actively and radically accept and/or endure their suffering, carrying hope for transformation and reconciliation in their marital relationships, and compassionate spirituality has been a significant aspect in these women's lives and spiritualities. Applying Joh's argument, some Korean women's lives of compassionate spirituality and *jeong* open up "spaces of potent transformative possibilities in the interstitial space of hybrid realities."¹⁰⁴

Some Korean Christian women frequently find meaning for their suffering and ways of dealing with their suffering through the stories of Jesus and Mary, who are considered as practicing compassion and *jeong* in their lives, as mentioned by Chung and Joh. Research participants Mia and Nami also mentioned that they practice compassion for their husbands based on their reflections on Jesus' love and caring for people. According to Chung, the prevailing image of Jesus is the suffering servant who created a new humanity through his suffering.¹⁰⁵ Jesus suffered not only due to a powerful empire and Jewish authorities, but also from the betrayal of his disciples. However, according to Joh, whenever he had a chance to avoid suffering and *han*-causing factors, Jesus mostly chose to practice compassion and *jeong* for the sake of transforming people and society, while remaining connected to his disciples and society. In addition, Jesus chose to practice compassion and *jeong*, not only for the oppressed, such as the sick and the poor,

¹⁰⁴ Joh, 154.

¹⁰⁵ Chung, *Struggle to be the Sun Again*, 53.

but also for the oppressor, such as the tax collectors and the centurion.¹⁰⁶ Joh states, “His radical living out of *jeong* is found in the way this *jeong* is extended to those who should have been ‘cut off.’”¹⁰⁷ Jesus rarely practiced being “cut off” from the oppressor in his ministry. Rather, Jesus sought to transform people and the world through living out *jeong*.

Because Asian women’s life experiences are deeply connected to suffering in their families, society, and culture, Jesus’ suffering is often used to define the meaning of their suffering. Asian women’s understanding, according to Chung, is “as Jesus suffered for others, Asian women suffer for their families and other community members”; if Jesus’ suffering was “salvific,” it can be understood that Asian women’s suffering is “redemptive”; if Jesus’ suffering was “life-giving,” Asian women’s suffering is “a source of empowerment for themselves and for others whose experience is defined by oppression.”¹⁰⁸ Chung states that, like some other Asian women, Korean women often find meaning for their suffering through the stories of Jesus’ life and death. Some research participants, such as Mia and Nami, see their suffering in the life of Jesus, and his life inspires them to consider Jesus a role model for dealing with their suffering, helping them find meaning in their suffering, and giving them a sense of agency and responsibility to practice compassion and *jeong* for their husbands rather than cutting off the relationships.

Chung also uses Mary, a female biblical figure, to explain the practice of compassion and the *jeong*-based decisions of Korean women. As a virgin woman in a patriarchal society, Mary’s decision to give birth must not have been easy, because she

¹⁰⁶ Joh, 157.

¹⁰⁷ Joh, 157.

¹⁰⁸ Chung, 54.

would have expected suffering as a consequence of her decision. Mary anticipated that her baby would be a cause of suffering, so it would have been better for her to say “no” to the angel or to try to end the pregnancy. Nevertheless, Mary decided to give birth and eventually became a channel for the birth of Jesus and a new humanity. Chung states,

With fear and trembling she takes the risk of participating in God’s plan out of her vision of redeemed humanity. Mary takes this not as a heroic superwoman, but as an ordinary woman who is receptive to God’s calling, which draws her from her own private safety. She is fully aware of the consequences of her choice: social ostracism or even the possibility of being stoned to death according to Jewish custom. But, Mary still chooses to give birth to the Messiah and thereby makes possible the liberation of her people.¹⁰⁹

Mary decided to take a risk and chose to accept her suffering in order to make possible the redemption and liberation of people. Some Korean Christian women can be compared to Mary when they practice *jeong* in dealing with suffering. They know that they might suffer the consequences of their choices. However, they decide to stay in the midst of suffering in order to bring potent possibilities and a new humanity, not only for themselves, but also for their husbands and children. They even decide to practice compassion and *jeong* toward others, especially women, in the midst of suffering, as active agents providing resources and support systems for them (as discussed in Chapter 4). For this reason, some Korean women, including my research participants, can be considered active, radical agents in how they deal with marital conflicts, abuse, or violence.

Davies similarly argues that the “complex structure of compassion means that it contains an openness to the possibility of the affirmation of an infinite, personal other which, for the Christian, is realized in faith,” as shown in Jesus’ “divine self-emptying

¹⁰⁹ Chung, 78.

and self-dispossession for the sake of the creation.”¹¹⁰ By reflecting on Jesus as “the compassion of God,” Davies insists that compassion is “a radical modality of goodness.”¹¹¹

If a virtuous act is to put ourselves at risk for the sake of another, then some degree of self-possession as self-awareness is intrinsic to that act. Unless we put ourselves at risk knowingly, with the self-awareness of a unified subject who is a responsible agent of their actions, then we do not put ourselves at risk at all. Rather we are put at risk by forces external to the self. Such an awareness of the self as that which is self-possessing and thus capable of self-abandonment can be performatively enhanced through the language of being. What comes into view here then is some innate connectedness, as early tradition affirmed, between being and the good: our self-possession as self-knowing yields the possibility of a free dispossession of self for the sake of the other.¹¹²

The arguments of Chung, Joh, and Davies are helpful for supporting and advocating for the hypothesis of this dissertation, which is that some Korean women decide to remain in conflictive and abusive marital relationships from a position of strength with self-awareness and are radical agents in their dealing with their marital conflicts in that they consciously decided to live in conflictive and abusive relationships and continuously work on transforming themselves and their spouses in order to reconcile with their husbands and recover the relationships. Compassionate spirituality and *jeong* for some Korean women can be a life force that inspires them to accept their husbands and endure their suffering until their husbands are changed, while they also work on reflecting on themselves in order to change.¹¹³ For Joh, insistence on rejecting and refusing endurance and separating from people who cause suffering has its basis in “modern dichotomies of self/other, oppressor/oppressed, and male/female,” and, in

¹¹⁰ Davies, xx.

¹¹¹ Davies, xxi.

¹¹² Davies, 8.

¹¹³ Joh, 153.

addition, this attitude has a tendency to criticize other types of transformation as passive and weak methods of dealing with abusive situations.¹¹⁴ Therefore, Korean women's practice of *jeong* in the midst of their sufferings could be considered an active and radical acceptance and a conscious decision to cope with their sufferings in their relationships with their abusive partners.

Self-Compassion

While the compassionate spirituality of some Korean women, including my research participants, is considered a radical acceptance of their spouses, their expressions of compassion raise issues related to self-compassion and “compassion fatigue” because they are considered to be “more caring, empathetic, and giving towards others than themselves” in their marital relationships.¹¹⁵ In other words, women are often in the position of experiencing “compassion fatigue,” “a type of exhaustion and burnout experience,” due to their continuous efforts to care for others.¹¹⁶ Among the research participants, Sevin and Hanna particularly expressed their feelings of *ansreoum* for themselves, since they felt the responsibility of taking care of their husbands based on their feelings of compassion. Jina, Julie, Jisu, Mia, and Nami also described their endless efforts to recover themselves and repair their conflictive and abusive marital relationships. When it comes to compassion, people often think about practicing compassion toward others since it literally means “to suffer with” and is defined as “suffering together with another, participation in suffering.”¹¹⁷ However, some of my research participants indicated the issues of self-compassion, and there are also

¹¹⁴ Joh, 152.

¹¹⁵ Neff, 189.

¹¹⁶ Neff, 192.

¹¹⁷ Barad, 12; Oxford English Dictionary Online (2009).

implications for self-compassion in discussions of compassion in religious teachings. For example, Jesus' teaching to "love your neighbors as yourself" indicates that the self can be an object of compassion from the perspective of Christianity.¹¹⁸

Some scholars who discuss self-compassion share similar understandings, arguing that the practice of self-compassion has to be prior to the practice of compassion toward others and can be explained by the concepts of acceptance and mindfulness. Kristin Neff, in *Self-Compassion*, indicates that self-compassion has to be practiced before one can practice compassion.¹¹⁹ Neff criticizes the tendency to evaluate oneself as either "good or bad," and she also rejects thinking of compassion as related to self-esteem because this notion can cause people to think of themselves as "perfect" or "better than" and fall into "narcissism, self-absorption, self-righteous anger, prejudice, [and] discrimination."¹²⁰ Instead, Neff argues for understanding compassion as acceptance without being too proud or too critical of oneself.¹²¹ Christina Feldman, in *Compassion*, also indicates acceptance as "the forerunner of compassion," and argues that it needs to be understood as "a deep inner willingness to embrace the imperfect in a heart free of judgment and blame," which is similar to Neff's view.¹²² For Feldman, the opposite side of compassion has a strong alliance with self-judgment, self-abandonment, self-neglect, self-denial, or guilt.¹²³ Likewise, Christopher J. Germer points to self-compassion as "a form of acceptance" in

¹¹⁸ Matthew 22:36-40, Mark 12:28-34, and Luke 10:25-28.

¹¹⁹ Kristin Neff, *Self-Compassion: Stop Beating Yourself Up and Leave Insecurity Behind* (New York: William Morrow, 2011), 7. Neff is an associate professor in human development at the University of Texas at Austin and is influenced by Buddhist philosophy and Eastern thought and spirituality.

¹²⁰ Neff, 8.

¹²¹ Neff, 6.

¹²² Christina Feldman, *Compassion: Listening to the Cries of the World* (Berkeley, CA: Rodmell Press, 2005), 92. Feldman is a cofounder of Gaia House in Devon, England and a teacher at the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts and at Spirit Rock in Woodacre, California. She studied the Buddhist meditation tradition in Asia for several years.

¹²³ Feldman, 92-93.

The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion.¹²⁴ For Germer, acceptance is “to embrace whatever arises within us, moment to moment, just as it is”; thus, self-compassion means “acceptance of the person to whom it’s happening” or “acceptance of ourselves while we’re in pain.”¹²⁵ The stages of acceptance presented by Germer are the following: “(1) Aversion— resistance, avoidance, rumination; (2) Curiosity—turning toward discomfort with interest; (3) Tolerance—safely enduring; (4) Allowing—letting feelings come and go; (5) Friendship—embracing, seeing hidden value.”¹²⁶ As a final state of acceptance, according to Germer, friendship can be achieved by both acceptance and mindfulness, and mindfulness can be used to lead to self-compassion as well.¹²⁷ Like Germer, Neff sees mindfulness as a way to achieve self-compassion.¹²⁸ Neff indicates that self-compassion can be achieved by combining three elements: “self-kindness,” “recognition of our common humanity” or “acknowledgment of the interconnected nature of [human] lives,” and “mindfulness.”¹²⁹ Mindfulness is understood as “the clear seeing and nonjudgmental acceptance of what’s occurring in the present moment,” and it is necessary to respond to reality in a “compassionate manner.”¹³⁰

In respecting Korean women’s compassionate spirituality and *jeong*, therefore, it is important for women as well as helping professionals to reflect on what it means to practice compassion for themselves. Applying the arguments by Neff, Feldman, and

¹²⁴ Christopher Germer, *The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion: Freeing Yourself from Destructive Thoughts and Emotions* (New York: Guilford Press, 2009), 33. Germer is a clinical psychologist, clinical instructor of psychology at Harvard Medical School, and a founding member of the Institute for Meditation and Psychotherapy.

¹²⁵ Germer, 33.

¹²⁶ Germer, 28.

¹²⁷ Germer, 89.

¹²⁸ Germer, 89.

¹²⁹ Neff, 41, 61.

¹³⁰ Neff, 80.

Germer, the research participants' expressions of self-compassion could be found in their awareness of paradoxical feelings (love and hate or *miun-jeong*) for their husbands, the mysterious presence of compassionate spirituality, and the complexities of their decision-making processes. Even though they sometimes regretted what they had done in dealing with their marital issues, they did not blame only themselves. Rather, they acknowledged their own portions of roles, responsibilities, and wrongdoings as well as their husbands' portions in their marital relationships. In their struggles to find ways to deal with their difficulties, they came to realize not only their own imperfection, but also their husbands' imperfection; they also recognized the common experiences of suffering in themselves and in their husbands and the interconnection between them. For this reason, their practices of compassion in the midst of their sufferings could be considered expressions of active and radical acceptance with the self-awareness and self-determination to cope with their sufferings and restore their relationships with their husbands.

However, I do not agree that the practice of self-compassion has to be prior to the practice of compassion for others. Reflecting on research participants' expressions, I found that compassion for themselves and for their husbands was practiced at the same time. The research participants have continued to find ways to release their afflictions and renew themselves, "recharge their batteries," so they will not be drained in their practicing compassion for their husbands.¹³¹ I also observed the complex coexistence of all of Germer's stages of self-compassion in the research participants' descriptions. When research participants confronted marital conflicts and abuse, they sometimes tried to avoid or ignore the reality by thinking of getting divorced, while they have also tried to

¹³¹ Neff, 193.

find ways to remove their afflictions and solve their problems. They freely expressed their feelings of love and hate, *mieun-jeong*, for their husbands, while they also expressed genuine compassion or *in-jeong* for their husbands as human beings who have suffered in their own family backgrounds. Because of the times and spaces they have lived through together, they revealed their feelings of companionship or friendship for their husbands. Therefore, helping professionals need to acknowledge the complex coexistence of the five stages or aspects of self-compassion when providing care and counseling for women in conflictive and abusive marital relationships.

In addition, in recognizing the inevitability of marital conflicts and coexisting feelings of love and hate, helping professionals need to be aware of wives' care for their "quite-hated-spouse[s]" and help them learn how to handle their "love and hate, honor and dishonor, obedience and disobedience" when dealing with marital conflicts.¹³² In other words, for women in conflictive and abusive marital relationships, self-compassion could mean letting go of their "right to resentment for being mistreated" by learning "how to be strong enough to be honestly loving and hating," and "how to fight" without becoming "volatile and violent."¹³³ Some research participants admitted that they responded to their husbands with abusive language and behaviors when fighting. Some of them expressed their aggression as a response to their husbands' abuse or violence or due to their accumulated anger and unsolved issues. While their own and their husbands' aggressiveness may look only destructive, Charny argues that aggressiveness could be used as "a constructive force" in marital conflicts.¹³⁴ While human aggression has been

¹³² Charny, 1, 10.

¹³³ Neff, 195; Charny, 1.

¹³⁴ Charny, 8.

generally been considered negative and destructive, arguments among scholars have been ongoing over whether human aggression is an innate instinct or not and whether it is “innately destructive or neutral” and indicate a positive, self-preservative aspect of aggression along with a destructive aspect.¹³⁵ In terms of constructive aggression, Charny argues that people need to accept their anger as an expression of aggression, without fearing their anger, and learn to express their anger constructively in dealing with marital conflicts.¹³⁶

Feminist pastoral theologian Kathleen Greider also defines human aggression as “significant energy, vigor, agency, enterprise, boldness, and resilience” and discusses aggression not only on the psychological level, but also on the political level.¹³⁷ That is, for people who have been subordinated, “constructive and positive uses of aggression” are necessary to achieve their freedom.¹³⁸ In arguing that compassionate confrontation is necessary in dealing with suffering, Greider cites Korean American theologian Andrew Sung Park:

Confrontation without understanding will cause unnecessary, hostile conflict. Compassion without confrontation will result in ineffective transformation. Confrontation with the heart of compassion for the oppressors will genuinely change their heart through creative tension.¹³⁹

In response to abuse or violence, people often think that it is better either to suppress their aggressiveness or exert it to show their power and control. However, it is

¹³⁵ Insook Lee, “Aggression in Korean American Women: Cultural Adaption and Conceptual Reformulation,” in *Women Out of Order: Risking Change and Creating Care in a Multicultural World*, ed. Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner and Teresa Snorton (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 165-67.

¹³⁶ Charny, 8.

¹³⁷ Kathleen J. Greider, *Reckoning with Aggression: Theology, Violence, and Vitality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 78. Cited in Lee, 170.

¹³⁸ Lee, 170.

¹³⁹ Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 171. Cited in Greider, 118.

necessary for wives to recognize that not only can “compassion without confrontation” be ineffective in marital relationships, confrontation without compassion and understanding can result in other marital conflicts and put them in danger. Therefore, it is important for helping professionals to help women learn how to use compassionate confrontation in recognition of the self-compassion that conveys women’s desire for well being and better relationships for themselves and leads to “proactive behavior to better one’s situations.”¹⁴⁰

Compassion as the Common Experience

While research participants’ compassionate spirituality and *jeong* have been explored with consideration for their individual and intrapersonal particularities as well as their particular contexts and culture, in this section, compassionate spirituality is discussed as the common experiences of some people, especially women, who have experienced suffering in their lives and their way of dealing with people who cause suffering, oppression, and injustice in public or in the world. During the period of my studies in the U.S., I have recognized the similarities among some Korean women, other Asian women, and African American women in terms of their suffering and their ways of dealing with difficult situations. For these groups of women, it is almost impossible to define humanity apart from their suffering, and the Korean concept of *han* can be used to describe their suffering in their particular contexts because of their long histories of suffering from discrimination and their unresolved resentment accumulated throughout their histories of oppression.

As discussed in an earlier section, Asia has been a place in which various forms of

¹⁴⁰ Neff, 12.

oppression have occurred, and women in Asia have struggled and suffered in their own contexts. Asian women have often suffered during wars, invasions, and cruel exploitation by foreign powers. For example, Korea was a place that many countries tried to occupy for their benefit; it was among countries used “as buffer zones by the two ideological powers”; and it experienced colonization by Japan for thirty five years, World War II, the Korean War, and eventually the division of the country.¹⁴¹ In the case of the Philippines, they suffered under colonization by Spain for three and a half centuries, by the United States for fifty years, and by Japan for three years.¹⁴² In these situations, women suffered a double or triple burden because they were women; their bodily integrity was often violated by colonial and military powers.¹⁴³ Under the neo-colonialist and military dictatorships in their countries, women were subject to being sexually tortured, raped, and killed in the streets and prisons when they were imprisoned during liberation movements.¹⁴⁴ In addition, Asian women have often suffered under the patriarchal familial, social, religious, and/or cultural structures and have continuously experienced domestic, economic, political, and religious oppression and discrimination because of their sex. Therefore, Asian women can be considered to be the “*han* of the *han*” and the “*minjung* within the *minjung*.”¹⁴⁵

One of the important characteristics found in reflecting on Asian women’s

¹⁴¹ Mananzan and Park, 76.

¹⁴² Mary John Mananzan, “Redefining Religious Commitment in the Philippine Context,” in *We Dare to Dream: Doing Theology as Asian Women*, ed. Virginia Fabella M.M. and Sun Ai Lee Park (New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 101.

¹⁴³ Chung, “Han-Pu-Ri,” 139-40; Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, Women in the Philippines and Asia, *Toward an Asian Principle of Interpretation: A Filipino Women’s Experience. Patriarchy in Asia and Asian Women’s Hermeneutical Principle*. Meeting, Madras, India, December 15-20, 1990, 1.

¹⁴⁴ Mananzan and Park, 79.

¹⁴⁵ Chung, *Struggle to be the Sun Again*, 42.

experiences is that Asian women have always felt for others and worked not only for their own liberation, but also for others' liberation.¹⁴⁶ While Asian women's spirituality has been criticized because their spirituality has been nourished by their understandings of their self-image and the gender-biased roles assigned to them by patriarchal societies, Mananzas states that Asian women's spirituality has been developed through their own personal, interpersonal, and social relationships and experiences with others in their struggles.¹⁴⁷ As described by Chung in the discussion of Korean women's spirituality, their "living experiences" and their "lived theology, theology in context" are related to their spirituality that feels for others, whether human beings or nature.¹⁴⁸ For many Asian women, like Korean women, compassionate spirituality is an important means for understanding their situations, raising women's consciousness, and empowering them in finding ways to deal with their situations.

In the case of African-American people in the U.S., they have also suffered for a long time from discrimination and have accumulated resentment and frustration over the course of their history in this country without finding satisfactory resolution for these conditions.¹⁴⁹ Among African-American people, there have been two main approaches to dealing with their *han* and suffering-causing factors. On the one hand, under the influence of the Black Power movement and black nationalists' separatism, defeating enemies and self-protection became dominant modes for dealing with their situations.¹⁵⁰ Based on

¹⁴⁶ Chung, *Struggle to be the Sun Again*, 91-96.

¹⁴⁷ Manazan and Park, 83-84.

¹⁴⁸ Chung, 89.

¹⁴⁹ JoAnne Marie Terrell, *Power in the Blood? The Cross in the African American Experience* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 3.

¹⁵⁰ James H. Cone, "Calling the Oppressors to Account: God and Black Suffering," in *Living Stones in the Household of God: The Legacy and Future of Black Theology*, ed. Linda E. Thomas (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 8.

these influences, black theologians began to develop black theology, which is grounded in God's liberating action for the sake of people of African descent.¹⁵¹ Because it has emphasized liberation, black theology has been called a theology of liberation. On the other hand, there have been some African-American people who have been called "integrationists" and have followed the ideas of Martin Luther King, Jr.¹⁵² According to James Cone, King insisted on the mutual liberation of blacks and whites and advocated that people work together toward a new world.¹⁵³ King interpreted "justice as equality with whites, liberation as integration, and love as nonviolence."¹⁵⁴ King's way of dealing with oppressors can be considered a way of practicing compassion not only toward other black people, but also toward white people, in that King provided opportunities to white people in order to create a society in which blacks and whites could live together in "a beloved community."¹⁵⁵

King's inclusion of oppressors as objects of liberation and compassion resonates with the thought of some womanist theologians.¹⁵⁶ Monica Coleman proposes that defeating enemies is not the only way to deal with enemies, and practicing compassion with enemies could be a possible way to work with them that emphasizes the notion of relationships, which are inevitable for all human beings. Coming from the perspective of process theology, a form of constructive postmodern thought, Coleman states, "Relationality is not a choice.... Relationships compose the world. They *are* the world.

¹⁵¹ Linda E. Thomas, ed., *Living Stones in the Household of God: The Legacy and Future of Black Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), x.

¹⁵² Cone, 7.

¹⁵³ Cone, 7.

¹⁵⁴ Cone, 9.

¹⁵⁵ Cone, 8.

¹⁵⁶ Womanist theology was developed to address the particular experiences of black women suffering under "the triple oppression of racism, sexism, and classism." Monica A. Coleman, *Making a Way Out of No Way: Womanist Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 6-7.

Relationships weave together our moral, cultural, religious, lived-in, believed-about, hoped-in world.”¹⁵⁷ Based on this understanding, Coleman believes that God is in the entire world, and God is “the God of all.”¹⁵⁸ Because God desires the well being of all of creation, rather than favoring the oppressed, God calls everyone to do justice in their lives. In order to overcome personal, social, and systemic evils, “creative transformation” must happen in both the oppressor and the oppressed through “teaching and healing” so that all can be saved.¹⁵⁹ For Coleman, God’s calling is communal, and salvation has to be communal, as King argued. Based on her perspective, the object of the practice of compassion includes individuals, communities, and even enemies, and the practice of compassion can be facilitated through teaching and healing.

Barbara A. Holmes, a womanist theologian, also argues for “liberation-in-relationship,” which refers to liberation for both the oppressed and the oppressors.¹⁶⁰ Holmes challenges a black theology of liberation by asking, “What does God intend for us to do?” “What is our role in this vast cosmos?” “How shall we relate to a God who liberates some and not others?” “Who is being liberated and from what?” “Can people be free if they are released from one set of limitations into another, from a box into a maze?”¹⁶¹ For Holmes, based on her cosmological analogies, liberation is understood in relationship. In the final summary of her book, *Race and Cosmos: An Invitation to View the World Differently*, she quotes theologian Kevin Sharpe:

Wholeness-with-diversity stands for liberation-in-relationship. Freedom lies within the whole. It requires a balance and an interplay between the desires and

¹⁵⁷ Coleman, 75.

¹⁵⁸ Coleman, 82.

¹⁵⁹ Coleman, 86.

¹⁶⁰ Barbara A. Holmes, *Race and the Cosmos: An Invitation to View the World Differently* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002), 168.

¹⁶¹ Holmes, 30, 38-39.

needs of the individuals and those of all else, including the environment. Freedom is liberation within the nexus of relationships with other people.¹⁶²

Holmes's vision and dream for liberation can be accomplished in relationship, and freedom is understood in wholeness with diversity. In addition, Holmes insists that "to view the world differently requires a transformative view of liberation."¹⁶³ Therefore, she even invites whites, who are called "enemies" in her discussion, to be involved in liberation, asking, "Can we institute a pedagogy for the oppressed and the oppressors?" in the hopes that both whites and blacks can be transformed and work together in reconciled relationships.¹⁶⁴ Holmes' approach recalls the ideas of King and Coleman as well as Korean women's compassionate spirituality.

While compassionate spirituality for my research participants or other Korean women could be understood as one of their individual particularities in their particular contexts, the arguments by Asian and Korean feminist theologians, integrationists such as King, and womanist theologians, such as Coleman and Holmes, reveal that compassionate spirituality is a common experience, especially for people who have experienced suffering. In addition, compassionate spirituality as a common experience has implications for how to work with groups and nations that have conflicts and cause suffering, oppression, and injustice in public or in the world. In confronting injustice and oppression, practicing compassion has not been preferred, and people have decided to fight in order to stop abuse, discrimination, and injustice because the practice of compassion can jeopardize the safety of people and result in more danger and suffering.

¹⁶² Kevin Sharpe, *Sleuthing the Divine: The Nexus of Science and Spirit* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 102, 103. Cited in Holmes, 168.

¹⁶³ Holmes, 30.

¹⁶⁴ Holmes, 40.

In particular, in dealing with conflicts between different groups or nations, the practice of compassion has often not been preferred. Liberation theology and the doctrine of Just War has appealed to people because they affirm that suffering-causing factors have to be removed, and people being oppressed have to be liberated from their oppressions. Rather than practicing compassion and altruism, defeating enemies has been more prevalent in conflictive relationships between ethnic groups and nations.

However, some people practice their compassion toward their enemies because they see themselves in their neighbors and enemies, just like some Korean women, including my research participants, who decide to practice compassion for their husbands because they see pain and suffering in their husbands.¹⁶⁵ Some groups of people decide to practice compassion for groups and/or nations they have conflicts with and that cause suffering, oppression, and injustice because of their beliefs that they will not have better communities or a better world without transformation and reconciliation with their enemies or oppressors. For one who sees oneself in one's enemies, practicing compassion toward enemies possibly means practicing compassion toward themselves at the same time. For some, there is no exception for the object of compassion, and disconnection can be considered to be more painful for them, as Feldman states,

Compassion has no hierarchy of worthy and unworthy suffering; it makes no distinctions between the deserving and undeserving. Wherever there is suffering, there is a need for compassion. Finding compassion for those who cause pain is

¹⁶⁵ My interest in compassion began when my mother talked about her experiences in dealing with the Gwangju Democratization Movement in 1980, as mentioned in Chapter 4. My mother used to tell me the reason why she and her neighbors secretly gave food not only to citizens and students protesting against the military government in Korea, but also to military people who came to oppress and even kill the people of Gwangju who were against the government. My mother mentioned that she and her neighbors felt pity and compassion for all the people who were engaged in this movement, including young military men. My mother said that she and her neighbors could not ignore the fact that young military men were other women's beloved sons and that they were involuntarily made to join in harming and killing people in Gwangju. Some women in Gwangju practiced compassion for their enemies because they felt compassion for these young military men as they considered them to be like their sons and saw their suffering.

an ongoing practice requiring remarkable patience and perseverance. It is a difficult journey, but the path of bitterness and division is far more painful.¹⁶⁶

In fact, it is still hard to imagine and could be controversial to think of practicing compassion for certain people or groups and to understand why people decide to practice compassion or “enter into another’s suffering.”¹⁶⁷ However, it is at least true that compassion for enemies can be done in recognition of “our common humanity” and human “interconnectedness” and help to break the dualism between self and others or oppressor and oppressed in order to “cross the borders that have been constructed in [people] through fear, prejudice, and mistrust.”¹⁶⁸ Furthermore, as presented by some practical/pastoral theologians, compassionate spirituality encourages people to find ways to participate in activities for the welfare of other people, whether they are oppressed or oppressor, and at the public and national levels. For example, Don Browning, James Poling, and Christie Cozad Neuger study family issues, including gender issues and domestic violence, because they believe that it is theologically, politically, and strategically important for both church and society to seek the creation of a new family ethic and advocate for better ways to live as families.¹⁶⁹ In particular, Poling and Neuger have cooperatively worked on helping abusive husbands and men. Just as some practical/pastoral theologians have worked to draw public attention to people in need and have advocated for better societies with compassionate minds, this dissertation also raises public concerns in the next chapter.

¹⁶⁶ Feldman, 78-79.

¹⁶⁷ Davies, 22.

¹⁶⁸ Neff, 195. 84.

¹⁶⁹ Don S. Browning et al., *From Culture Wars to Common Ground: Religion and the American Family Debate*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000); James Newton Poling and Christie Cozad Neuger, eds., *Men's Work in Preventing Violence against Women* (New York: Haworth Pastoral Press, 2002); Christie Cozad Neuger and James Newton Poling, *Care of Men* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007).

Reflection

Compassionate spirituality related to *jeong* is a characteristic of my research participants, and their compassionate spirituality could be based on various elements in their lives and a combination of them, such as *jeong*, their experiences of giving birth, their lived experiences of caring for children and family, their relationship-oriented spiritualities, their religious teachings, their moral values, and familial, social, and cultural expectations. Their compassion challenges the dualism of self/other and abuser/abused since these women see themselves and their suffering in their spouses and try to help them experience transformation and reconciliation. In addition, their compassionate spirituality reveals their radical agency in participating in suffering.

While relational stickiness, compassionate spirituality, and *jeong* could be thought to affect these women negatively, acknowledging these aspects encourages helping professionals and people in general to avoid the popular psychological habit of blaming women for staying in their “sick relationships” and suggests a more respectful and adequate description of women’s involvement in their relationships.¹⁷⁰ Applying the perspective of Goldner et al., acknowledging women’s compassionate spirituality and *jeong* without criticism will allow them to have “a sense of dignity” rather than feel shamed for their relational attachments.¹⁷¹ This will also create space for women to explore their paradoxical and complicated feelings, such as *miun-jeong*, and their confusion about their feelings and relationships.¹⁷² Feeling safe from criticism when their compassion and *jeong* are respected, women will be able to unpack their various reasons

¹⁷⁰ Goldner et al., 11.

¹⁷¹ Goldner et al., 11.

¹⁷² Goldner et al., 11.

for staying and feel free to explore their complicated emotions and thoughts as well as their options, eventually choosing “to leave or to stay on very different terms.”¹⁷³

In addition, acknowledging and respecting compassionate spirituality and *jeong* draw attention to “the complex and dynamic nature” of human relationships and helps to recognize human connectedness and relationality.¹⁷⁴ Compassionate spirituality and *jeong* encourage embracing the complexities and multiplicities of women’s lives. As Cooper-White affirms, women and women’s lives are complicated, not only because of their multiple roles and relationships, but also because of their “multiple internal states of emotion and identity.”¹⁷⁵ According to Thomas Moore, in *Care of the Soul*, and Herbert Anderson, it is necessary for people, especially helping professionals, to appreciate “human complexities” and the “paradoxical mysteries” of human life in order to care for people’s souls.¹⁷⁶ Embracing the complexities of marital relationships could mean understanding the paradoxical coexistence of love and hate in marital relationships and the mysterious existence of compassion and *jeong* for abusive husbands. This also could mean recognizing and respecting women’s radical agency as revealed in their compassionate spirituality. These understandings will help caring professionals acknowledge “the importance of staying in uncertainty” and cultivate “some comfort with uncertainty and an attitude of constant learning,” as suggested by RCT.¹⁷⁷ In addition, applying Anderson’s argument, the goal of care needs to be “empowering people to embrace paradox, seek justice, acknowledge finitude, and practice hospitality in

¹⁷³ Goldner et al., 11.

¹⁷⁴ Joh, “Violence and Asian American Experience,” 146-147.

¹⁷⁵ Cooper-White, 9.

¹⁷⁶ Herbert Anderson, 196; Thomas Moore, xix.

¹⁷⁷ Jordan, 65.

the face of fear and contingency,” and “living with ambiguity and incomprehensibility” can be understood as spiritual maturity.¹⁷⁸ In the next chapter, through respecting research participants’ strength and radical agency based on their compassionate spirituality, I suggest revised practices of pastoral care and counseling not only for women in conflictive and abusive relationships, but also for families, churches, and society in the Korean context.

¹⁷⁸ Anderson, 196. 197-98.

CHAPTER 6

THE PRAGMATIC TASK: REVISED PRACTICES IN PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELING

The pragmatic task aims at describing the implications of the study's findings and the "strategies and actions that [may be] undertaken to shape events toward desired goals."¹ To discern implications and applications of my research, I will use the interdisciplinary approach discussed in Chapter 4. The suggestions for practical/pastoral practices for churches, institutions, and the society are presented first because "individual issues cannot be separated from public issues," and people, relationships, and theories are "embedded in" their contexts.² I argue for unpacking the implicit reality by discussing marital conflicts, abuse, and domestic violence and for normalizing marital conflicts, but not domestic violence. In order to bring social change to practices of care and counseling, I also discuss public care issues, public policies, and social welfare policies related to marital conflicts and domestic violence in Korean society.

The second set of suggestions for practical/pastoral practices are related to women's individual care. I propose to pay attention to women's voices and acknowledge and appreciate their agency. These women are considered persons, not only as victims and survivors, but also as agents who can give care just as much as they need to receive care. In other words, such individual care could mean not only caring for Korean women who have coped with their marital issues, but also facilitating the contribution of their wisdom to their communities. Therefore, for revised practices in pastoral care and counseling, I suggest not only care strategies for Korean women in conflictive and

¹ Osmer, 10.

² Browning et al., 2; Jordan, 6.

abusive marital relationships, but I also advocate public discourse and changed actions, ethics, policies, and even transformation of the Korean family, society, and culture.

Unpacking the Implicit Reality and Normalizing Marital Conflicts

In spite of the prevalence of marital conflicts, abuse, and violence in Korean families, the various existing care systems have not provided appropriate help for women and men in conflictive and abusive marital relationships (see the discussion under the heading, “Holistic Dimensions,” in Chapter 4). This does not mean their families and churches have completely failed to support them in their marital difficulties; rather, it means that, as stated by some research participants, it would be better for people to have a chance to talk with parents, church members, or pastors to learn what it means to be married and how to deal with marital conflicts, abuse, and violence.

Research participants pointed out a lack of advice, instruction, or communication regarding marriage from their parents and churches before and after marriage. In the case of families, this experience implies that the participants’ parents did not receive any advice or instruction from their parents, and some parents hesitated to talk about marital issues because they thought marital issues are private and personal. In the case of churches, there was a great deal of hesitation and even reluctance on the part of pastors to discuss marital conflicts, abuse, and violence, as described in Chapter 4. Potential research participants who were asked to consider participating in my research were understandably hesitant, since it is natural to feel uncomfortable talking about marital issues with a stranger (a researcher). For this reason, I met one potential participant before interviewing her. She wanted to meet me before she decided to participate in the

interview. After briefly meeting to discuss the purpose and procedures of the interview, she volunteered to participate in the study and made an interview appointment.

However, my discomfort and frustration came when I confronted the hesitation and reluctance of pastors. While hesitation and reluctance could be interpreted in many different ways, I felt struck by the reality: ministers and pastors are aware of and admit the reality that there have been church members who have struggled in their conflictive and abusive marital relationships, but they did not want to discuss the issues related to marital conflicts and domestic violence in their parishes. Even senior pastors refused to introduce my research study and recruit parish members from their churches, saying that “marital conflicts” and “domestic violence” are issues too sensitive to talk about. In some churches, marital issues, especially abuse and violence, seem to be secrets, and discussing them appears to be taboo. This was an “implicit reality,” as described in the section, “Holistic Dimension: Implicit Reality and Multiple Layers of Systems,” in Chapter 4.

As a result, several questions came to my mind: What will parish members do when they confront marital conflicts and domestic violence? Where will they go to find support and help? What kinds of messages do pastors deliver about conflict and violence in their parishes? Even though some answers to these questions were reflected in research participants’ responses, it was still frustrating to confront hesitation and reluctance on the part of ministers and pastors. My frustration has led me to discover a vocation for dealing with marital issues, especially after I heard a comment from a female church leader who attended a class I taught. I provided seminars to female church leaders who have attended Presbyterian churches in the eastern and southern parts of Korea. At the end of the last class, I asked them what had been the most striking learning in the class for them. One

female church leader responded that it was helpful for her to hear that marital conflicts are normal in a sense because marriages bring together two different people with different personalities, experiences, and family backgrounds, and they have to learn to live together. Other participants in the seminar nodded their heads, showing their agreement with this woman's statement. From her comment and others' responses, I was able to release and solve some of my questions and come to the conclusion that unpacking the implicit reality and normalizing marital conflicts will be an important task for me and those in other helping professions.

Unpacking the implicit reality means to discuss marital conflicts, abuse, and domestic violence. Domestic violence is often thought to be about brutal physical violence and life-threatening situations. However, as I discussed in Chapters 1 and 3, domestic violence can exist in various forms, including verbal, emotional, physical, and instrumental forms. Except for brutal ongoing violence, it is sometimes hard for individuals and couples to make a clear distinction as to whether they are simply experiencing marital conflicts or whether it is domestic violence. Unpacking the implicit reality will empower people to know what it means to experience domestic violence, to reflect on their experiences, especially on the visibility, intensity, and frequency of abuse and violence in their marital relationships, and to seek help if necessary. In order to unpack the implicit reality, people need to be allowed to discuss the issues related to conflicts and violence in families. In addition, teachers, pastors, professors, theologians, and helping professionals need to reflect on their perspectives and develop programs and structures that will create spaces for openly discussing family issues. For example, recent efforts by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (여성가족부) to bring attention to

abuse and violence in schools and families in Korean society could be understood as a way to unpack the implicit reality.

Normalizing marital conflicts does not mean normalizing domestic violence; rather, it means conveying the reality that it is normal to experience conflicts in any type of relationship. To reiterate the perspectives of RCT, marital conflicts as experiences of disconnection can be considered to occur “in all relationships,” and disconnections “themselves are not harmful.”³ For this reason, the cycle of abuse that was first presented by Lenore Walker and has often been used to explain the pattern of domestic violence in the literature can be applied to all couples who experience the inevitable marital conflicts.⁴ The cycle of abuse refers to “three cyclical stages of abuse”: “the tension-building phase,” “the out-of-control abusive phase,” and “the genuine remorse phase” or “honeymoon period.”⁵ Depending on how couples experience the out-of-control abusive phase, their experiences of marital conflict can be defined either as “marital conflicts” or “domestic violence.” As indicated by Israel Charny, “the largest majority of marriages are riddled with profound destructive tensions, overtly or covertly,” which means that couples will go through marital conflicts both and either/or “overtly” and “covertly.”⁶ Applying this cycle to marital relationships rather than using it only to discuss domestic violence, it is necessary to admit that “all-the-bitter-ups-and-downs-of-marriage,” except violence, have to be understood as normal and natural, rather than problematic and pathological.⁷

³ Jordan, *Relational-Cultural Therapy*, 5.

⁴ Lenore E. Walker, *The Battered Woman* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), 55-70.

⁵ Grant L. Martin, 43-46; Friesen and Friesen, 189; Gaddis, 27-28; Peter H. Neidig and Dale H. Friedman, *Spouse Abuse: A Treatment Program for Couples* (Champaign, IL: Research Press Company, 1984), 61-64.

⁶ Charny, 1.

⁷ Charny, 4.

Normalizing marital conflicts in some sense will empower women, along with men and children, to share their struggles in their families and to reach out for help when they need it, either from inside or outside of their families, without worrying about being blamed and criticized for their experiences of conflicts. Being silent about conflicts, abuse, and violence encourages people to not ask for help and could result in chronic abuse and violence in families. Furthermore, dualistic thinking—either romanticizing marriage as shown in romantic movies or thinking marital conflicts are abnormal, problematic, and even unfaithful—likely will cause women to feel ashamed and humiliated. Therefore, normalizing marital conflicts will allow couples to discuss their marital issues with less worry of being shamed and ashamed and less worry of being criticized because of their marital struggles and conflicts, which could be considered to be normal.

Family as Private and Public

Unpacking the implicit reality and normalizing marital conflicts have to be done at various levels because the issues of marital conflict and domestic violence are deeply embedded in the various systems that surround people, as presented in Chapters 2 through 4. The arguments of James Poling, who identifies himself as an “advocate and activist in the family violence movement,” help to develop the unpacking and normalizing process on personal, social, and religious levels.⁸ Poling has contributed to bringing attention to the issues related to family violence, such as sexual violence against women and children and economic vulnerability related to family violence. In *The Abuse*

⁸ James Poling is a European-American male and an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA). He has been a practical/pastoral theologian for over thirty years and recently retired from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. James N. Poling, *Render unto God: Economic Vulnerability, Family Violence, and Pastoral Theology* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2002), 3

of Power, he addresses the ignorance of churches about sexual violence against women and children in families, churches, and society.⁹ Even though Poling focuses on sexual violence in this book, he identifies important implications for issues that are also related to marital conflicts and domestic violence. By theologically and hermeneutically reflecting on the abuse of power on “personal, social, and religious levels,” Poling’s arguments support the proposal that churches and societies have to be challenged not only to acknowledge their ignorance or neglect of the issues of abuse and violence in families, churches, and society, but also to provide appropriate resources for intervention and healing from violence. They should participate in challenging men who are abusing power and work on changing “policies and procedures to prevent abuse of power.”¹⁰ His arguments encourage reflecting on the fact that Korean churches and society have concealed an implicit reality and have not provided resources for help, intervention, and healing.

As exemplified by Poling’s arguments, recent practical theological works have expanded their attention from individual care to social context, critical public issues, and ethics.¹¹ They utilize social analysis in order to promote public discourse and transformed action, not only for the Church, but also for society.¹² In other words, practical

⁹ James N. Poling, *The Abuse of Power: A Theological Problem* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 11, 13.

¹⁰ Poling, 13, 19, 21, 35-40, 54-60. Poling, 183-186.

¹¹ Mary Elizabeth Moore, “The Purpose of Practical Theology: A Comparative Analysis between United States Practical Theologians and Johannes Van Der Ven,” in *Practical Theology and Hermeneutics: Contributions of Johannes van der Ven*, ed. Chris Hermans and Mary Elizabeth Moore (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 5. Examples include the following: Pamela D. Couture, *Blessed Are the Poor? Women's Poverty, Family Policy, and Practical Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991); Pamela D. Couture, *Seeing Children, Seeing God: A Practical Theology of Children and Poverty* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000); Don S. Browning et al., *From Culture Wars to Common Ground: Religion and the American Family Debate* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000).

¹² Mary Elizabeth Moore, “Purpose of Practical Theology,” 5.

theological works have labored to develop “contextual theologies, culturally sensitive approaches to ministry, and/or praxis-grounded contributions to public discourse” and to advocate “actions that are contextually relevant and specific.”¹³ In addition, some practical theological works, especially by feminist and womanist practical theologians and liberation theologians, focus on “the liberation, transformation or repair of the world.”¹⁴ Their works aim at “systemic social change rather than social analysis or theological-ethical knowledge.”¹⁵ Therefore, unpacking the implicit reality and normalizing marital conflicts have to be done on personal, familial, public, and political levels. In addition, the suggestions of practical/pastoral practices for women in conflictive and abusive marital relationships have to be presented for families, institutions, and societies because individual issues cannot be separated from public issues, and people, relationships, and theories are “embedded in” their contexts.¹⁶

Public and Political Levels

In order to unpack the implicit reality and normalize marital conflicts, first of all, it is necessary to provide “a new family ethic” for people, churches, and society by applying a suggestion made by Browning, Miller-McLemore, Couture, Lyon, and Franklin in *From Culture Wars to Common Ground*.¹⁷ In discussing the issues or crises of American families, they suggest considering each family a “public-private family.”¹⁸ For them, it is theologically, politically, and strategically important not only for churches

¹³ Mary Elizabeth Moore, “Purpose of Practical Theology,” 6.

¹⁴ Mary Elizabeth Moore, 8. Moore lists the following scholars as practical and liberation theologians: Rebecca Chopp, Thomas Groome, Allen Moore, Pamela Couture, James Poling, Carol Lakey Hess, Bonnie Miller-McLemore, Kathleen Greider, Virgilio Elizondo, Bernard Lee, Kathy Black, and Mary Elizabeth Moore.

¹⁵ Mary Elizabeth Moore, 8.

¹⁶ Jordan, 6.

¹⁷ Browning et al., 2.

¹⁸ Browning et al., 2.

but also for societies to have “a new family ethic” for better practical/pastoral practices.¹⁹ In the Korean context, families, churches, and the society consider family issues, including abuse and violence, a private matter and hesitate to get involved in helping women, as well as men and children, who experience conflicts, abuse, and/or violence. However, this understanding has to be changed in order to provide better care for women, men, and children in Korea. Therefore, the fundamental agenda that needs to be applied to families, churches, and society in Korea is that family issues are both private and public issues. It also means that personal and family issues are related to political matters. As RCT insists, “the personal is political, the political is personal, and the rewriting of a psychological paradigm becomes an act of social justice.”²⁰ This agenda encourages helping professionals to acknowledge the ambiguous roles of family members, friends, and churches as resources for research participants, while presenting the limitations of such roles, as noted in Chapter 4. It also encourages them to examine and reconstruct their roles in order to provide better assistance for women in conflictive and abusive marital relationships. These understandings should be a foundation and a starting point for the process of unpacking the implicit reality and normalizing marital conflicts.

Within this agenda, various communal and public services for couples and families have to be developed, publicized, and practiced in various places. As noted in Chapter 4, some research participants shared their ideas for ways to support couples experiencing marital conflicts. Julie expressed her frustration in terms of a lack or absence of education regarding marriage, parenting, and marital conflicts. She advocated the necessity of preparation for marriage, such as premarital education, parenting classes,

¹⁹ Browning et al., 2.

²⁰ Jordan, 6, 26.

and marital conflict management programs in her church. Even though Julie wanted to have a happy marital life, she said that she did not know how to achieve that. For this reason, Julie named three thoughts regarding marriage that she would share if she had opportunities to have conversations with couples: (1) do not guess, but rather, ask and talk; (2) have a mentor who is trustworthy; and (3) ask for help from mentors when confronting abuse or violence in marriage in order to find solutions. Since she is not affiliated with a specific religion, Hanna advocated the necessity of premarital education programs elsewhere in Korean society, not only in churches. Hanna said that it would have been better if she had participated in such programs to discuss marital issues and learn responsibility and solution strategies. The ideas of these research participants advocate the establishment of effective prevention, education, and counseling programs for families in churches and local areas in Korean society.

As possible examples, churches can provide various inexpensive programs, including parenting classes and premarital education programs, for all people, whether they are church members or not, and thus play a role as a local supportive community center. As I am aware, and as Hanna also mentioned, some Protestant and Catholic churches have provided one or two classes for their communities. In addition, churches can network with various private and public organizations, including local Christian and non-Christian counseling centers, universities, and seminaries and local Healthy Family Support Centers (건강가족지원센터), and ask helping professionals to provide programs at their church or their own centers so that people in need can receive care, counseling, and education for marital issues. Institutions, seminaries, and universities also can develop networks with various organizations that have been funded by the Korean government

and thereby benefit from that funding. As an example, the Christian Healing and Counseling Institution²¹ has connected with a local domestic violence shelter and a domestic violence counseling center that have been funded by the government. The establishment of such networks will increase the accessibility of effective prevention, education, and counseling programs for families in churches and local areas in Korean society.

Policy Development

In order to bring social change to practices of care and counseling, it is also necessary to discuss public care issues, public policies, and social welfare policies related to marital conflicts and domestic violence in Korean society. In *Blessed are the Poor? Women's Poverty, Family Policy, and Practical Theology* (1991) and *Seeing Children, Seeing God* (2000) Pamela Couture discusses the realities of the single-parent, mother-headed family and children in poverty, and she provides helpful insights for introducing “the social ecology of care” and social change to practices of care at public and political levels.²² Specifically, Couture’s arguments shed light on the importance of having discussions about public and social welfare policies related to marital conflicts, abuse, and domestic violence. To apply her arguments in order to bring social and public changes to practices of care and counseling in Korea, it is important to (1) hear the voices of men and women who have experienced marital conflicts and domestic violence; (2) reflect on the current public and social welfare policies that need to be challenged; and (3) discuss how to work on challenging and changing the policies using the perspective of

²¹ For reference, see www.chci.or.kr.

²² Pamela D. Couture, “Feminist, Wesleyan, Practical Theology and the Practice of Pastoral Care,” in *Liberating Faith Practices: Feminist Practical Theologies in Context*, ed. Denise M. Ackermann and Riet Cons-Storm (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 27, 29.

an ethic of care and shared responsibility.

My meeting with a domestic violence shelter counselor in Seoul and my research of participants' experiences raise various issues related to public policies in the Korean context. One of the current policies for police departments related to domestic violence is the mandatory presence of police officers at a household when domestic violence is reported. However, a domestic violence shelter counselor indicated that this regulation is not consistently followed by the police, as also experienced by Mia. Mia indicated that she had not received any help from police departments, in spite of her emergency calls to 119, which resulted in her not seeking help anymore. In addition, while women with brutal and chronic domestic violence experiences have been recently given attention by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (여성가족부), with its efforts to eradicate family, school, and sexual violence, women do not get appropriate help if they have not experienced violence considered brutal, physical, and/or chronic. Many Korean women in conflictive and abusive marital relationships have not been well cared for since they are not considered to be in a critical situation. "Unseen abuses" (보이지 않는 학대나 폭력), such as verbal abuse, financial abuse, and controlling, have not been considered violence or abuse, and women with "unseen abuses" are excluded from getting help from police and social welfare systems.

Even for women suffering from brutal and chronic domestic violence, there has been a lack of facilities to accommodate women with children. According to a shelter counselor, only one domestic violence shelter in Seoul is available for women to stay in for two years; all the other shelters only allow families to stay six months, with occasional extensions of three or more months. During their stays, women have to find a

place to live, a job that will provide them a living, and a school for their children.

Although people have awareness of the issues of abuse and violence in families as a result of the efforts to eradicate abuse and violence, social welfare workers and counselors often indicate that there are not enough systems and only ineffective policies to support women in conflictive and abusive marital relationships.

Another frustrating aspect presented by one domestic violence shelter counselor was related to the attitudes of police officers, social workers, and public welfare workers and their lack of knowledge in dealing with women along with children and abusive men who need help. As Mia experienced and a shelter counselor also indicated, for abusive partners there have been no policies or mandatory requirements in the past, such as receiving counseling or participating in anger management classes. Even though policies have recently been developed to provide counseling for abusive husbands, according to a domestic violence shelter counselor, these policies are not acknowledged by police officers and are not explained to women who experience domestic violence when they seek help. This means that abusive husbands are not required to receive counseling unless their wives ask for it specifically. Most women and even most police officers do not know that women can request such programs for their partners, due to a lack of knowledge and information regarding existing programs. In addition, people can earn a certificate from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (여성가족부) to become a domestic violence counselor with only 100 hours of education and no clinical experience. Thus, it is possible for them to get involved in working with women experiencing domestic violence without enough knowledge, including knowledge of public policies, or clinical experience. For this reason, women often do not hear any explanations regarding

programs and possible interventions for their families from police and social welfare agencies.

Therefore, it is important to reflect on the current public and social welfare policies and to evaluate the limitations and challenges that helping professionals, police officers, social workers, and others have confronted in putting existing policies into practice. In other words, it is urgent to change the policies in order to provide better help for women, men, and children, since there are many problems with current policies and the practices of police at various levels, as discussed by research participants and a shelter counselor. For example, regular mandatory education about public and social welfare policies has to be provided for clergy, social workers, police officers, and other helping professionals. These opportunities for education will serve as a reminder of and empowerment to act on current policies, as well as a chance to discuss the problems of current policies and challenge officials to have more effective public policies. In addition, policies and programs have to be developed and provided depending on levels of abuse, such as visibility, intensity, and frequency of abuse and violence. Proper or mandatory reporting and intervention systems developed in the United States can be modified and adapted to the Korean context. In other words, it is important to develop contextual approaches, public discourse, ethics, and public policies in order to provide better help for women in conflictual and abusive marital relationships.

Care and Counseling: Respecting and Embracing Complexities

Along with providing suggestions for unpacking the implicit reality and normalizing marital conflicts, it is important to discuss the issues related to pastoral care and counseling for women in conflictive and abusive marital relationships. In Chapters 4

and 5, I explored various aspects in order to understand women in conflictive and abusive marital relationships. Even though it is difficult to explore all these dimensions when working with women, helping professionals need to be mindful of the various elements revealed in women's lives by using the holistic assessment model so they can understand women from a holistic approach and provide better assistance for them. Keeping in mind all the aspects discussed in the holistic model in Chapter 4, in this section I present essential elements of providing care and counseling for women in conflictive and abusive marital relationships based on an interdisciplinary approach, primarily drawing from the RCT perspective and feminist pastoral theology.

Ministry of Presence: Listening for the Soul

When women in conflictive and abusive relationships seek help, the primary and essential task for helping professionals working with them is "listening for [their] soul."²³ According to Pamela Cooper-White, a feminist pastoral theologian, many times people suffer because they are not able to speak their feelings and thoughts to someone, or they do not feel that they are deeply heard by anyone.²⁴ All my research participants also presented that they were frustrated when they felt not understood and unheard. Therefore, giving "voice to the voiceless" is the starting point and an essential element in working with women in conflictive and abusive marital relationships.²⁵

Listening for the soul and giving voice both require not focusing on quick fixes or limited interventions. Instead, helping professionals ought to provide opportunities for

²³ Jean Stairs, *Listening for the Soul: Pastoral Care and Spiritual Direction* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 15. Stairs defines listening as an act of intentionality, obedience, intimacy, receptivity, hospitality, focus, soul inquiry, and habit. Stairs, 16-26.

²⁴ Cooper-White, "Complicated Woman," 13.

²⁵ Cooper-White, 13.

women to express themselves by waiting, sustaining, and helping to develop rapport and intimacy so the women feel the safety to express their “emotions, thoughts, and experiences, including [their] strengths, vulnerabilities, and deepest spiritual images, questions, prayers, laments, and concerns.”²⁶ In addition, providing them opportunities to express their own feelings and thoughts in dealing with their marital issues will help them to “express what has remained hidden or beneath the surface,” without worrying about being criticized.²⁷ In other words, by hearing them, helping professionals will be able to give women opportunities to release what has not been expressed or heard and help them to reflect on how they have felt and worked to sustain their lives and cope with their difficulties. Furthermore, through the lens of RCT, having occasions to express themselves and to be listened to, women will be able to “lessen [their] experiences of isolation” that are considered to be “a major source of suffering for people” and to move “out of isolation” rather than “out of relationship” by experiencing connection with helping professionals.²⁸ Women also will be able to increase their “capacity for self-empathy” or self-compassion, which I discussed in Chapter 5 as a necessary element for research participants who experienced marital conflicts and abuse.²⁹

Acknowledging and Appreciating

Based on the RCT perspective, during the therapeutic process, helping professionals, including pastoral caregivers and counselors, need to offer “radical respect and a deep appreciation” of women’s suffering, their ways of surviving and coping, and

²⁶ Stairs, 18.

²⁷ Stairs, 16-17.

²⁸ Jordan, 1.

²⁹ Jordan, 35.

their agency in dealing with marital difficulties.³⁰ This means acknowledging and appreciating how hard it must be for them to live and survive in conflictive and abusive marital relationships. In addition, this means acknowledging and appreciating the decisions women have made as they have sought to deal with their sufferings and difficulties, as long as their safety when violence is involved has been addressed.

Women's decisions might have been made in anticipation of consequences, such as shame, guilt, and discrimination, which they might experience after divorce. Their decisions might have been based on religious beliefs and teachings or sociocultural expectations in Korean society. They also might have been based on their vocations and beliefs about their families. No matter what the reasons, helping professionals need to respect their decisions and appreciate how they have tried hard to work with their disturbed marital relationships and situations, since their continuous efforts to recover their relationships with their husbands could be considered a sign of their relational courage, which implies a capacity to work on reconnecting or restoring relationships in spite of risks and vulnerabilities.³¹ Therefore, it is important for helping professionals to respect where these women are in their life journeys, whether they decide to live in conflictive and abusive marital relationships or not.

Acknowledgment and appreciation of their decisions and their reasons for the decisions could help women open their minds to exploring their decisions and the reasons for them through feeling mutual empathy and mutual empowerment in their relationships with helping professionals. In the RCT approach, mutual empathy and mutual empowerment are considered to be "at the core of growth-fostering relationships" as "a

³⁰ Jordan, 35.

³¹ Jordan, 32.

fundamental and complex process of active participation in the development and growth of other people and the relationship that results in mutual development.”³² While empathy and empowerment are often thought to be a “one-way” approach, offered by helping professionals to clients, in RCT, mutual empathy and mutual empowerment emphasize “the responsiveness” between the two parties.³³ Therefore, in RCT, mutual empathy is defined as “openness to being affected by and affecting another person,” and mutual empowerment is considered to be “built on a relationship of engagement, of being present and caring about the relationship as well as the individuals in it.”³⁴

Mutual empathy and mutual empowerment will be important aspects of working with women in conflictive and abusive relationships, since the women will be allowed to see “the impact [helping professionals] have on one another,” and they will experience “being felt” through the helping professionals’ responsiveness.³⁵ By experiencing acknowledgment and appreciation for their decisions and reasons for them from helping professionals, women can experience mutual empathy and mutual empowerment, understand the meaning of growth-fostering relationships, and increase their capacity for mutual empathy and mutual empowerment in other relationships, which is helpful for resolving experiences of disconnection.³⁶

When women are considered to be agents rather than merely victims and survivors in conflictive and abusive marital relationships and when their values are acknowledged and appreciated, women can more freely explore what has affected their

³² Jordan, 24, 103.

³³ Jordan, 25.

³⁴ Jordan, 104-05.

³⁵ Jordan, 47.

³⁶ Jordan, 24.

decision-making processes, how much authority they have given to themselves, and how others have influenced their decisions. By exploring their current conditions without worrying about criticism, they can increase “knowledge and clarity” about their marital experiences with their spouses and differentiate “growth-fostering relationships” from destructive relationships, as compared to simply disconnecting, separating themselves from their partners.³⁷ This approach encourages helping professionals not only to be aware that anybody can be “the source of injury” or an abuser if they exercise “power over” others, but also to assist their clients to reflect on their own and their spouses’ ways of exercising “power over” and move toward practicing “power with” in marital relationships.³⁸ These understandings were also presented by research participants in their reflections on their ways of dealing with their spouses. Some of the women had regrets about their own actions in their marriages, including their own practices of abuse and violence in dealing with their spouses’ abuse and violence.

Helping professionals’ encouragement or insistence on women ending abusive relationships without hearing what the women want or respecting their desires to keep their families together may drive women away and thus be a cause of further disconnection in these women’s lives. Respecting women’s lives by acknowledging and appreciating their suffering, decisions, and reasons for their decisions could reduce women’s need to defend themselves and instead facilitate mutual empathy, mutual empowerment, and self-reflection while exploring possible resources for coping, without

³⁷ The characteristics of growth-fostering relationships are “(1) an increase in energy; (2) increased knowledge and clarity about one’s own experience, the other person, and the relationships; (3) creativity and productivity; (4) a greater sense of worth; and (5) a desire for more connection.” Jean Baker Miller and Irene Pierce Stiver, *The Healing Connection: How Women Form Relationships in Therapy and in Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 36-41, cited in Jordan, 3-4.

³⁸ Jordan, 42, 105.

being pressured to end their relationships. In addition, respecting women's lives and decisions leads women to grow "through and toward" growth-fostering relationships, not only in counseling, but also outside counseling relationships and throughout their lifespans, with increased "creativity and productivity."³⁹

Embracing Complexities

In meeting, working with, and counseling women in conflictive and abusive relationships, it is important to understand the complexities found in women's lives. As discussed in Chapter 3, my research participants showed that their reasons for living with their situations cannot be explained by a single reason, but combined various elements, such as their values, beliefs, feelings, sense of responsibility, changes, finances, and children in their lives. For some, one element can be seen playing a more vital role than others, while for others, various elements were equally involved in their decision-making processes. In addition, as presented in Chapter 5, research participants indicated the complex and ambiguous roles of family, friends, church, and community, which have positively and negatively influenced them and their realities, surrounding them with multiple layers of systems that are still patriarchal and gender-biased. Research participants also understand marriage and life as complicated in that they both include a mixture of suffering, responsibility, obligation, happiness, and courage. Women are seen having miscellaneous identities, not only as victims and survivors in abusive relationships, but also as agents who have continued to work on recovering their relationships and keeping their families together based on their vocation and hope for themselves and their family members as well as self-confidence, self-efficacy, courage,

³⁹ Jordan, 3-4, 97.

and resilience. Finally, as discussed in Chapter 5, their feelings of love and hate for their spouses and the presence of compassionate spirituality are paradoxical and complicated to understand, since their love and hate, *jeong*, and compassion blur the boundaries between them and their spouses and convey the complex interplay of their reason, emotions, and faith.

In her article, “Complicated Woman,” Cooper-White argues that women and women’s lives are complicated not only because of their multiple roles and relationships as daughters, mothers, wives, employees and so on, but also because of their “multiple internal states of emotion and identity.”⁴⁰ As presented by research participants’ stories, their decisions, reasons, and identities are complicated; therefore, it is important to be mindful of the significance of multiplicity and complexities when seeking to understand women in conflictive and abusive relationships and to consider their “identity complexity” and their complex decision-making processes in their particular contexts as more responsive and healthier forms of selfhood and decision-making, rather than problematic.⁴¹ As also mentioned in Chapter 6, it is necessary for helping professionals to appreciate human complexities and “paradoxical mysteries” in women’s lives.⁴² Embracing complexities and paradoxical realities helps to acknowledge the interplay of various dimensions on personal, familial, social, cultural, and religious levels and to encourage professionals to understand and assess people in holistic ways. In order to engage in holistic assessments, as discussed, it is important to assess not only the psychological dimension, but also familial, financial, societal, cultural, and religious

⁴⁰ Cooper-White, 9.

⁴¹ Cooper-White, 11, 17.

⁴² Thomas Moore, *Care of the Soul*, xix; Herbert Anderson, “A Spirituality for Family Living, 196.

dimensions. Similarly, it is essential to assess not only problems, but also resilient or protective factors in the individual, familial, and communal dimensions.

For these reasons, individuals, families, church members, clergy, professors, theologians, helping professionals, social workers, and policy-makers have to reflect on their perspectives and the biases embedded in their thoughts, studies, research, helping structures, and policies, not only in the Korean context, but also in any contexts where work is done with women in conflictive and abusive marital relationships. In addition, they have to contribute to developing helping environments, programs, structures, and policies that are mindful of the complexities and the paradoxical mysteries of women's lives and their decisions in their particular circumstances.⁴³

⁴³ Herbert Anderson, 196; Thomas Moore, xix.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION AND CONTRIBUTION

Final Reflection

While meeting research participants and reflecting on their lives, I often think of the sermon I did at Kresge Chapel, Claremont School of Theology on Feb. 9, 2006 when I was a third-year M.Div. student. I preached with the title, “Foolish Sowers?” on Mark 4:1-9, one of Jesus’ parables, which is well known as the parable of the sower. We often hear messages asking what kind of soil we are, good or bad, and this parable has been used to emphasize the responsibility of the individual believers to produce fruit and bring harvest. However, I interpreted this parable from the sower’s point of view since seminarians could be considered as the sowers who are sowing God’s word to people, and I raised questions about what kind of sowers we, as seminarians, want to be. It is obvious that we want to be good sowers to bring big harvests rather than sowers sowing the seed in bad, unproductive soil—rocky ground, among thorns, on the path; otherwise, we could be considered to be wasting the seed and wasting time. At the end of sermon, I asked whether we, the sowers, have to exclude people who are like these soils since they would not be able to bring a big harvest.

My research participants’ stories remind me of this sermon since women like them often seem to be seen as sowers who sow the seed in unproductive soils and have been criticized as foolish sowers; some might say that there is no value or virtue in enduring suffering no matter what, and it is better to stay away from conflictive and abusive marital relationships. However, some Korean women radically choose to stay in their relationships, recover themselves with their resilience, and work on transforming or reconciling with themselves and their husbands. In noticing that women who remain in

marital conflicts and domestic violence have often been criticized as having low self-esteem or being passive and dependent, this dissertation reveals that some Korean women's reasons for remaining in conflictive and abusive marital relationships include various and complex aspects, such as psychological, socio-economic, socio-cultural, and religious/spiritual aspects. In addition, their reasons reveal their life agency, courage, resilience, spirituality, vocation, and hope, which have been rarely investigated or have been underestimated in the discussion of women in conflictive and abusive marital relationships. This dissertation's findings support us to argue that the complexities of women's lives—especially, their roles, decision-making, agency, courage, resilience, religion/spirituality, vocation, and hope—reveal that some women remain in conflictive and abusive marital relationships from a position of strength and will most benefit from care that is non-pathologizing. This dissertation is not to encourage Korean women to stay in the midst of suffering. Rather, this dissertation advocates for understanding the complexities of women's lives by reflecting on their agency, resilience, and spirituality, so that they can be better understood and receive better help without being criticized and blamed for their ways of living. When working with women in marital conflicts, including any type of domestic violence, once their safety is addressed, it is important to provide a safe environment for women to express and explore, not only their concerns, feelings, and thoughts, but also their reasons for staying, acknowledging human complexities and the paradoxical mysteries of married life. In addition, women need to be allowed to make their own decisions about whether to leave or stay as they explore and contemplate various possible resources.

Contribution, Limitation, and Future Research

This practical/pastoral theological work has an intention to present Korean Protestant women's various and complex reasons for staying in conflictive and abusive marital relationships through reflecting on psychological, socio-economic, socio-cultural, and religious/spiritual aspects and the interplay of them. In particular, this dissertation pays attention to aspects such as women's life agency, resilience, and spirituality, which have been neglected and underestimated in helping women struggling with their marital lives. These aspects are identified as their strength to cope with their situations. This dissertation challenges people who work with women in conflictive and abusive marital relationships. Families, church members, clergy, professors, theologians, helping professionals, social workers, and policy-makers need to reflect on their perspectives and biases embedded in their thoughts, studies, research, helping structures, and/or policies. This dissertation also advocates for development of helping programs, structures, and policies that are mindful of the complexities of women's agency, resilience, and spirituality, so that women do not hesitate to reach out for help or fail to get proper help because they anticipate being blamed and criticized.

This dissertation has limits in its scope since my empirical research was done with a small sample of seven Korean women, six Protestant Christian and one non-Christian, who have been in Korean male-female marital relationships, and the interdisciplinary practical theological reflection was done based on the experiences of these women. These women have settled into their marriages in a sense, since they have been married more than ten years (though one woman recently decided to live separated from her husband). This means that this research does not include newly married women or women who

have been dealing with marital struggles or domestic violence for shorter periods of time, less than ten years. While my research participants experienced some type of psycho-education classes and/or counseling classes due to their marital struggles, none of them utilized a domestic violence shelter program. In addition, in this dissertation, I did not include men whose wives are abusive to them. Similarly, I did not include children who experience their parents' conflictive and abusive marital conflicts in my research. In the future, much more research is needed with both these populations—men with abusive partners and children of conflictive and abusive marital relationships. Mirroring the approach used here, such future research can be done on the agency, resilience, and spirituality of husbands and children who suffer because of conflictive and abusive marital relationships.

Appendix A-English Informed Consent for Interviews¹

Title of Study

Embracing Paradox and Complexities: Agency, Resiliency, and Spirituality of Korean Women in Conflictive and Abusive Marital Relationships

Principle Investigator

Sanghi Yoo

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Academic Dean: Dr. Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook

Academic Advisor: Dr. Kathleen Greider

Chairperson of Institutional Review Board: Dr. Tom Phillips

Introduction

I am Sanghi Yoo, a PhD student in Practical Theology, with a concentration in Spiritually Integrative Psychotherapy at Claremont School of Theology. I am conducting this phenomenological study as part of my dissertation research. My academic and research advisor is Dr. Kathleen Greider, Professor of Practical Theology, Spiritual Care, and Counseling at Claremont School of Theology. Please contact either of us if you have questions about this study. Contact information is following;

Dr. Kathleen Greider (909)-447-2540, kgreider@cst.edu

Claremont School of Theology. 1325 N. College Ave. Claremont, CA 91711 U.S.A.

Sanghi Yoo (010)-6302-4089, sanghi.yoo@cst.edu.

Dokripmoon Samho Apt. 104-806, Soedaemoon-Gu, Seoul. South Korea.

Purpose of this Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study, entitled “Embracing Paradox and Complexities.” This study is conducted by Sanghi Yoo under the supervision of Dr. Kathleen Greider of Claremont School of Theology. The purpose of this study is to understand Korean women’s reasons for staying in conflictive and abusive marital relationships. Your participation in the study will contribute to a better understanding of Korean women’s lives and decision-making in conflictive and abusive marital relationships. The understanding gained through this phenomenological study will be then utilized for further reflection to understand its implication for practical/pastoral theology and pastoral care and counseling.

¹ Adapted from a sample consent form by Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2008), 96-97.

Procedures

If you consent, you will be asked to have two or three interviews with me in a mutually agreed place on two or three different days in a month, preferably, to protect your privacy, in a reserved room at the counseling setting, possibly in Yonsei Counseling and Coaching Center, Christian Healing and Counseling Institution, or Soul Friend Pastoral Care and Counseling Center. However, we will meet at whatever location is ideal for you. Some basic questions will be asked, and after the interviews are done, I will reflect on your responses and on my response to what you share, and bring my reflection back to you in the final session in order to have an opportunity for clarification, correction, and more information. Each interview will last for 1 to 2 hours. All interviews will be recorded in an audio format and will be password protected.

Voluntary Participation or Withdrawal

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may decline to answer any question and you have the right to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. If you want to withdraw from the study, you may simply stop participating or let me know of your intention.

Risks/Benefits

There are no known major risks associated with this interview. However, since it deals with sensitive personal matters, it is possible that you might feel distress in the course of conversation. If this happens, please inform me promptly. I will provide you appropriate support and, in case you experience severe distress, give you referral information for you to receive other care if your desire.

There is no guaranteed benefit, but you may find it meaningful and beneficial to reflect on your marital relationship. Also, this study is intended to explore voices of Korean women in conflictive and abusive marital relationships in hopes that it will benefit other women in such relationships. There will be no costs for participating.

Confidentiality/Anonymity

Your name, email address, and other personally identifiable information will be kept confidential during all phases of the research and writing process. No personally identifiable information will be publicly released. I will be the only person present for the interview and the only person who listens to the tapes. The data will be stored in my personal laptop and a back-up drive, both of which will be password protected. I will also use a laptop locking device and password protected bag. The digital audio recording of the interviews will be destroyed when my dissertation is completed.

If you approve, I will keep the de-identified and password protected digital files of transcripts and coded data for up to three years after the completion of the dissertation in order to do further research with the data. If you approve, please write your initial here _____.

When I report the research findings through my dissertation or publications, I will use pseudonyms-made up names-for all participants, unless you wish to choose your own pseudonym for this study. If you wish to choose your own pseudonym, please write it here: _____. If the results of the research are used and discussed for

educational purpose or published, no information will be included that would reveal your identity; your identity will be protected through disguise.

Sharing the Results

I will use the results of my interviews as part of an interdisciplinary practical theological reflection that will serve as my Ph.D. dissertation. The dissertation will be submitted to the faculty of the Claremont School of Theology and, after its completion, both a print and digital copy of the completed dissertation will be made available in the Claremont School of Theology Library. This dissertation will be also be available digitally to other researchers through Proquest dissertations. There is the possibility that I will publish all or part of this study or refer to it in published writing in the future. In all events, I will continue to protect your anonymity, as described above.

Questions about your rights as a research participant

If you have questions about your rights or are dissatisfied at any time with any part of this study, you can contact anonymously if you wish, the chair of the Institutional Review Board by phone at (909)-447-6344 or email at irb@cst.edu. You can send mail to The Chair of the Institutional Review Board at Claremont School of Theology. 1325 N. College Ave. Claremont, CA 91711.

Participant's Signature

If you are satisfied with your understanding of the information in this document and agree to participate in this research project, please sign and date both copies of the form and take one copy for your records.

----- **Date:** -----

Please print your name below

Researcher's Signature

----- **Date:** -----

Sanghi Yoo

Appendix A-Korean

인터뷰 동의서

연구제목

역설과 복합성의 포용: 갈등적, 학대적 부부관계속 한국여성이 갖는 주도성, 회복탄력성, 영성에 대한 연구(가제)

연구자, 기관, 연구목적

저는 현재 미국 클레어몬트 신학대학원 목회상담학과 박사과정에 재학중인 유상희입니다. 저는 역설과 복합성의 포용(가칭)이라는 제목으로 캐터린 그라이더 교수님의 지도하에 논문을 준비하고 있습니다. 본 연구의 목적은 부부사이의 갈등이나 학대를 경험하는 한국 여성을 대상으로 한 심층면접을 통해 여성분들이 어려움속에 가정을 유지하는 이유들과 특히 여성분들이 가지고 있는 주도성, 회복탄력성 및 영성에 대해 고찰하여, 부부관계에 어려움을 겪는 한국 여성에 대한 보다나은 이해와 실천신학적, 목회상담적 대응방안을 연구하고자 합니다.

자발적 참석과 거부권

인터뷰는 자발적 참여로 특정질문에 대답하고 싶지않거나, 진행도중이라도 인터뷰에 응하고 싶지않으시면 언제든지 연구자에게 알려주시기 바랍니다.

비밀보장, 익명성 및 결과의 공유

인터뷰에 참여하시는 분들의 개인 신상 등의 모든 정보는 익명으로 처리하여 사생활을 보호하고, 모든 자료들은 연구 목적 이외에 다른 용도로 사용되지 않을 것을 약속드립니다. 연구결과는 익명으로 논문 및 기타 연구에서 언급될 수 있습니다. 참여자의 요청이 있을 경우 인터뷰 자료를 참여자에게 공개하고, 또한 참여자가 원할 경우 면담 결과 자료를 철회할 수 있습니다.

(만약 동의하시면 3 년정도 연구결과를 보관하여 앞으로의 연구에 활용될 수 있습니다.

동의____)

(원하시는 익명이 있으면 써주시기 바랍니다.____)

인터뷰 절차

인터뷰에 동의하시면 두, 세 번 정도의 인터뷰가 한달 안에 진행될 것이며, 인터뷰의 답변들은 수정, 보완이 가능합니다. 각 인터뷰는 한시간에서 두시간 정도 소요되며 모든 인터뷰는 오디오테잎에 저장됩니다. 저장된 인터뷰는 분석이 끝난 후 모두 삭제됩니다.

위험이나 이득

인터뷰 참석으로 인한 위험성은 없으나, 질문을 듣고 대답하는 과정이 심리적 자극이나 스트레스를 줄 수도 있습니다. 만약 그러한 상황이 발생할 경우 연구자에게 알려주시고 휴식시간을 갖거나 적절한 도움을 제공받을 수 있습니다. 만약 원하시면 상담을 의뢰할 수 있습니다. 인터뷰를 통해 자신의 부부관계를 돌아볼 수 있는 기회가 될 수 있으며, 인터뷰에 임하는 것이 의미가 있다고 느낄 수 있습니다. 인터뷰 참석을 위한 비용은 없습니다.

만약 연구에 대한 질문이 있거나, 자신의 권리에 대한 질문이 있으실 경우 다음에 연락처를 이용할 수 있습니다.

연구자 유상희 sanghi.yoo@cst.edu, 010-6302-408

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연구장 Chairperson of Institutional Review Board: Dr. Tom Phillips tphillips@cst.edu or irb@cst.edu

클레어몬트 신학대학교 Claremont School of Theology
1325 N. College Ave. Claremont, CA 91711

저는 위의 사항을 읽고 인터뷰에 임하기로 동의합니다.

참석자의 싸인

날짜

참석자의 이름

연구자의 싸인

날짜

유상희

Appendix B
Interview Intake Survey
인터뷰 준비 설문

Your Name or Pseudonym 본명 또는 익명

Contact Info. 연락처: 전화 또는 이메일

Age 나이 (연령대)

Education 학력 (예: 초등, 중등, 고등, 대학, 대학원)

Occupation 직업

Number of Children and Age of Children, if any 자녀의 수와 나이

Any Medical Issues 병력

How long have you been married? 결혼하신지 얼마나 되셨나요?

How long have you been a Christian? 기독교인이 되신지 얼마나 되셨나요?

Denomination 교단

Thank you for filling out this form
감사합니다

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